



## **Courage Under Fire: Navigating the Head of Department Role in Challenging Circumstances**

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## **Abstract**

The Head of Department is caught between department members and senior management which underscores courage and resilience as a middle leader. In many ways, the Head of Department epitomizes the idea that middle leaders are “the meat in the sandwich” (Anderson, Scott, Coates, 2008, p. 12). This study examines the challenges associated with the leadership of an English Department within a regional, non-government school in NSW, Australia. Using the approach of an Institutional Ethnography incorporating a Teacher Self-Study, my role as Head of Department is examined. As Head of Department, I was able to implement a number of actions taken in order to assist with the improvement of the teaching and learning in the Department. These practices include: the development of a Department Handbook; incorporating Faculty Meetings with a focus upon pedagogy and shared practice; developing a collegial culture in the English Department which involved sharing of resources between teachers, classroom visits between teachers and also one-on-one conversations; addressing the underperformance of staff; writing and resourcing teaching and learning programmes; building staff morale; and, protecting the English teachers from hindrances to their teaching.

It is this qualitative aspect involved in transforming an English Department and the actions taken to improve it that is the focus of this study. *Courage Under Fire: Navigating the Head of Department Role in Challenging Circumstances* as the title of this thesis indicates, serves to encapsulate my story within this study. The research design incorporated a variation upon the participant observer approach in the form of a Teacher Self-Study firmly situated within a framework of an Institutional Ethnography. A variety of data sources were drawn upon including semi-structured interviews, a survey, Department Review, Registration and Accreditation Documentation, Researcher Journal, and a Professional Review.

The key findings of this study relate to being courageous in managing the performance of staff within the department and being resilient to cope with the loneliness that this created for me in this role. This study also highlighted resilience and courage needed to maintain an effective working relationship with the Senior Management Team.

This study found that there were many time pressures on my life as HoD. Teaching and learning responsibilities, pastoral care and co-curricular involvement as well as other duties of the HoD made the role demanding. At the heart of HoD leadership are the interactions with teachers and students on a daily basis. The importance of effective interpersonal skills in the development of a

collegial culture within the Department is an important finding in this study. However, as learning is the core business of the school, the HoD needs to be someone of outstanding curriculum and pedagogical expertise. This study shows how a middle leader with strong leadership vision and skills can positively impact a department despite a somewhat negative Senior Management Team operating from above in the school hierarchical approach.

### **Declaration by author**

This thesis is composed of my original work, and contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. I have clearly stated the contribution by others to jointly-authored works that I have included in my thesis.

I have clearly stated the contribution of others to my thesis as a whole, including statistical assistance, survey design, data analysis, significant technical procedures, professional editorial advice, and any other original research work used or reported in my thesis. The content of my thesis is the result of work I have carried out since the commencement of my research higher degree candidature and does not include a substantial part of work that has been submitted to qualify for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution. I have clearly stated which parts of my thesis, if any, have been submitted to qualify for another award.

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**Publications during candidature**

No publications

**Publications included in this thesis**

No publications included

**Contributions by others to the thesis**

No contributions by others

**Statement of parts of the thesis submitted to qualify for the award of another degree**

None

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To the people who read this thesis who have experienced challenging circumstances in their roles in educational institutions, the words of Winston Churchill apply: “Never give in, never give in, never, never, never give in”.

**Keywords**

middle leaders, head of department, leadership, curriculum, courage, resilience, challenging circumstances, senior management team, school improvement, independent schools

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# List of Abbreviations

HoD – Head of Department

ICT – Information and Communication Technologies

SMT – Senior Management Team

# Chapter 1 – Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

The Head of Department role could be seen as the metaphorical ‘meat in the sandwich’ where the incumbent is caught between the wishes of the senior leadership team and the teachers within the department whereby the Head of Department has to navigate what could be potentially a fraught situation. The focus of this teacher self-study is on leadership at the Head of Department level and the role that Heads of Department play in school improvement with particular emphasis on student learning outcomes.

There has been a significant amount of research conducted into the role of the Principal in improving the learning outcomes of students in schools. Two multinational leadership studies, completed simultaneously but coordinated by different agencies, were the Carpe Vitam Leadership for Learning Project (MacBeath, 2006) and the International Successful School Principal Project (Leithwood & Day, 2007). Each of these projects examined the nexus between leadership, learning and ways in which leaders influence student learning. The key findings from both of the projects further suggested that particular characteristics and practices of Principals are conducive to improvements in student outcomes. The core practices that were found to be most critical were couched in terms of building a vision and setting directions; managing people; re-designing the organisation; and finally, managing the teaching and learning programme. The Head of Department can also apply these practices and characteristics in their own leadership of the department.

Apart from research focussing on the Principal in school leadership, leadership research has also focussed on the role of Heads of Department in relation to school improvement and effectiveness initiatives. This research has historically been directed towards the connections between effective schooling and leadership practices. Dinham (2006) argued that Heads of Department should have highly developed interpersonal skills in order to be effective in taking their department further. Work undertaken by Harris and her colleagues (1995) in the UK postulated that there were several characteristics, such as the collaborative culture of the department, which were of significant benefit to the effectiveness of a faculty. However, as a Head of Department must have a sound grasp of the teaching and learning process, this person is in the position to have a direct influence on the improvement of student outcomes due to their centrality in the process itself (Leithwood, Mulford & Silins, 2004).

The aim of this study is to document and analyse my experiences and challenges in leading an English Department in regional NSW between late 2007 and the end of 2010. As a teacher self-study, my lived experience within the school is studied. It also demonstrates what it was like to work at the school and paints a picture of the two experiences – life in the English Department and what my role encompassed. There are many lessons that can be learnt from this study. The teacher self-study and the institutional ethnography provide a very personal account of my lived experience. Whilst the school would be considered to be quite successful academically, the English Department was one that was under scrutiny for both HSC results and staff turnover. There had been a long history of the Head of English position being one where there were frequent changes resulting in instability within the Department. In this teacher self-study as Head of Department, I was caught in the middle and I was dealing with pressures from the Senior Management Team (SMT) which included workplace bullying and stymying of initiatives aimed at improving student learning and morale within the English Department.

## **1.2 This Study**

### **Introducing the school context**

The school in which this study is located is in regional NSW. It is an independent school of approximately 1100 students from Kindergarten to Year 12. Approximately 70% of the secondary school students are boarders from diverse areas of NSW and beyond. There is a diverse curriculum offering for students in Preparatory, Junior, Middle and Senior Schools. The school also has a large teaching staff. The secondary school (Years 7 – 12) comprising the middle and senior schools, has approximately 90 staff. The junior school (Pre Kindergarten – Year 6) has approximately 30 staff. The school is a boarding school and the school grounds are expansive. The school has large budgets and charges commensurate fees. The school has some heritage-listed buildings as it has been in existence for approximately 125 years. The school is very well resourced. The school is spread over two sites. The main campus is where teaching takes place and is also where the boy boarders are housed. The other campus, four kilometres away, is the girls' boarding site. Each site has large grounds, manicured gardens and a 50 metre indoor swimming pool. It has state-of-the-art technology in the majority of classrooms. It has a large catering staff who prepare in excess of 1200 meals per day. There is also a health care centre employing two full-time registered nurses. In total there are approximately 220 staff members who work in the school. The school is the second largest employer in the regional city after government offices.

Between 2008 and 2010 when this study was conducted, a large proportion of the staff in the school had been there for more than 20 years. There was also a significant number of staff that had been there for fewer than five years. Longevity of service is indicative of the average age of the teaching staff. The average demographic of the staff at the time that this study was conducted were baby boomers, married with adult children. The average age of staff members was in the vicinity of 50 years old.

The school is a Church school and the Christian ethos of the school is relatively pervasive. Students go to Chapel once per fortnight and teachers are required to be sympathetic to the religious ethos of the school. Parents are valued and have high expectations of success for the students in the school. The school has traditionally been a high performing school in terms of HSC results. Good results and high parental expectations place high demands on the academic staff. There is also the expectation that parents can contact teachers any time of the day or on the weekend. Also, high demands are placed on the teachers in terms of meeting deadlines, adhering to school policy, preparation of lessons and also of planning and assessment documentation. It is also mandatory for teachers to be involved in co-curricular activities two afternoons per week and on Saturdays.

### **Positioning myself in this study**

Despite the fact that the school has a history of outstanding HSC results across a range of subjects, this has not been the case for the English Department. In 2003, the English Department failed registration and accreditation and the school's HSC results in English were the worst in the history of the school; a feat repeated in 2006. In 2007, independent consultants were commissioned to determine the cause of this situation. The investigators' findings pointed to the ineffectiveness of the Head of Department and some teaching staff, but also to some school-wide issues. The report from these independent investigators resulted in the departure of the Head of Department two weeks after its release and the departure of half the staff within the department at the end of 2007.

A national search was conducted in August 2007 for the new Head of Department and resulted in me being appointed. It was the Head of Department's role to provide stable leadership and direction for an unstable department that was facing registration and accreditation in 2008. It was an expectation that the Head of Department would improve the HSC results and build a positive perception of the English Department in the eyes of the local community and the parents despite the fact that I was taking on an English Department that was decimated in both numbers and spirit.



### **1.3 The significance of this study**

The teacher-self study I conducted, explored the extent to which the Head of Department could effectively contribute to the effectiveness of the school (Harris et al., 1995); develop a culture of shared vision for the department through effective management and organisation, specifically in relation to the teaching and learning programmes (Leithwood et al., 2006b); and, directly contribute to improved student learning outcomes. There is a plethora of research on Principals (for example, Leithwood & Day, 2007; MacBeath, 2006; Robinson, 2007) to name but a few and their connection to student outcomes but research on the ways that Heads of Department is an area that is largely unplumbed.

Given my role as Head of Department, this thesis is framed through the qualitative methodological lenses of an institutional ethnography (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009; Johnson & Christensen, 2004; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Smith, 2005) and teacher self-study (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Craig, 2009; Diamond, 1993; LaBoskey, 2004; Mishler, 1990; Pinnegar, 1998; Schön, 1983; Zeichner, 2007). The institutional ethnography focuses on one specific department and responds to studies by Dinham, (2007) and Harris et al. (1995, 1998) which called for research to be conducted further through the lens of individual subject departments – a topic about which we know very little. In this study there were nine participants, which did not include me. The participants ranged in teaching experience from beginning teachers to very experienced teachers with experience of more than 30 years. The teachers involved in this study completed a survey, a Professional Review of my leadership and they were interviewed in a semi-structured manner.

The teacher self-study employed in this thesis fits with my role as Head of Department, and makes space for analysis of the actions I undertook to improve an underperforming English Department within a high-performing school. This study details the various actions required for faculty improvement, and particularly those of an interpersonal nature that appeared to build and enhance staff morale. As a teacher self-study, this thesis documents how I carried out the necessary leadership, management and teaching functions of the role. I worked in the school and led the faculty under investigation in this study. I was in a unique role to perform this study and am positioned at once as researcher and researched. As the Head of Department, I was in a position of power and privilege within the school which provided me with the opportunity for a “real” world blending of the theoretical with the “real” life situation I found myself in, that is, leading a department through particular kinds of initiatives to improve student learning outcomes in English. Through an analysis of conversations, negotiations and departmental meeting agendas, an insider-view of working with people to affect changes is provided.

For Heads of Department in other schools, my experience in the role as it is analysed and interpreted may resonate with their own experience in other schools and countries. Another value that this study demonstrates is my intentions in order to create a more stable and cohesive English Department through a range of administrative and interpersonal initiatives in the face of opposition from more senior positions.

This study might also serve as a blueprint for others in leadership roles wishing to document their own middle leadership journey. It would also be of interest to those who are aspiring to positions of Head of Department in the future. Mulford (2008) argues that educational research should be able to assist practitioners in their work, as the sharing of ‘stories’ is significant. It enables readers to develop their skills in leadership by learning from others. Whilst leadership is contextually specific, nonetheless prospective readers would be able to read what was done in this particular context and potentially adapt their leadership based on the research evidence in this study.

## **1.4 Starting points and standpoints**

This thesis is framed as a blend of teacher self-study and an institutional ethnographic study. In this research, I hold several roles. I am the researcher but also the subject of the research. Before I begin to discuss and analyse what I did in order to improve the morale of the department, to support and improve learning through innovative teaching and learning practices and to implement a range of leadership and management practices, I would like to provide some background context to how it is that I came to start this project and from where I stand.

I started at the school in late 2007 as the sixth Head of English in five years. I had been the Head of English before at a school in Sydney. I had been in a few schools and had very good experience in working with other people in all areas within a school. I was 30 when I was appointed to the school in this study. I had completed postgraduate coursework studies in Educational Leadership and was eager to apply what I had learnt to leading another department. I had left my previous school where I was Head of English to take on this role as the school was bigger and considered to be one of the top regional schools in NSW. It was a tremendous opportunity to lead a large department at my age and level of experience.

When I first started at the school, the Principal made it very clear to me that the English Department was considered to be quite unstable and in need of solid leadership. It had always been the largest

department within the school. When I commenced as Head of Department (HoD), there were 17 teachers. I was the eighth HoD in seven years. There were nine teachers from the department who agreed to participate in this project. Two of them had been at the school for less than one year. Three of the teachers had been in the department for between one and three years. A further two more teachers had been at the school for between three and five years. One of the teachers had been in the department for between five and 10 years. Finally, there was one teacher who participated in this project who had been at the school for more than 10 years.

My brief was to provide good leadership and take the Department into the future. On commencing at the school, I found that the English Department did not have any unified curriculum documents and that the school was going to be inspected by the NSW Board of Studies in May 2008. Following the Review into the English Department earlier in 2007, the morale amongst the English staff was very low and, at the end of the year half of the teachers left as either retirement, moved interstate or changed schools either in the local area or in Sydney. The recruitment of staff for the following year started during November 2007 and continued until mid-January 2008. Part of my role was to be part of the staff recruitment. Over the course of seven weeks, I interviewed for the eight available positions. It was hard to attract teachers to regional areas. The school is approximately four hours drive from Sydney; many people would not come over the Blue Mountains. We were able to secure people for these positions but the majority (six out of eight) of the teachers we employed were in their first year of teaching.

On reflection, this posed many wonderful opportunities to develop each of these teachers into fine professionals with much support, encouragement and professional learning. However, there were also challenges associated with the employment of so many beginning teachers. It meant that lots of close supervision was required but also mentoring to help the new teachers flourish and to remain in the profession. Additionally, I would need to complete their accreditation processes with the NSW Institute of Teachers. This was to be a huge opportunity to influence and develop new teachers but also a challenge given all that was required.

The Senior Management Team (SMT) at the school consisted of the Principal, Deputy Principal, Director of Studies, Director of Co-curricular, Bursar, Director of Marketing and Communications, Head of Preparatory School, Director of Staff and the Director of Boarding. Whilst the term 'leadership' was frequently used in the school, the roles of Heads of Department and Heads of House were considered to be 'middle management' rather than needing to demonstrate any forms of 'leadership'. The nomenclature used in Head of Department meetings or any staff meetings was

firmly rooted in management speak. It was a widely held belief at the school that leadership was exhibited by only one person in the school, the Principal.

Over the course of Term 1 2008, I then wrote the remaining programmes, policies and procedures for the department to ensure that everything was compliant with the NSW Board of Studies requirements. Time was very much limited. As Head of Department, I was teaching one class less than a full-time English teacher. A full-time teacher has a load of 45x53 minute periods per fortnight at this school. My load was 36x53 minute periods per fortnight but I also had additional responsibilities as the Head of English and this far surpassed the allocated time for the role. Meeting with each of the teachers on a fortnightly basis occupied many hours during the school week. Also, the number of beginning teachers also took a lot of my preparation and writing time.

As I progressed through my time at the school, I implemented a range of additional strategies to help the teachers do the very best that they could. Not only did we have user-friendly teaching and learning programmes, we also had rigorous assessment practices. However, there was a lot more work to be done on improving the English Department. Implementation of external marking of the internal examinations for Year 12 students, study days for students in their final year of school, performance feedback conversations with teachers which focussed upon their professional goals and a culture of classroom observations. Additionally, incorporation of administrative practices in the form of a Department Handbook and ensuring that Faculty or Department meetings occurred fortnightly was a high priority. Over time, the performance management resulted in the departure of two staff members.

Starting points and standpoints are essential for building a solid basis of understanding regarding what the school was like and what I was able to implement in my time at the school. This study became really important to me because I was convinced that my experience was not an isolated event and that there were probably many others in leadership in other schools around the world who have had similar experiences to me. It is with much conviction that I believe my story of educational leadership needs to be told because other HoDs in other schools could read about the experience of another HoD and also their own experience in leading a department may not be too dissimilar to my own and that despite whatever situation they may be in, they can make a positive difference to student learning.

## 1.5 Research questions

The key research question underpinning this study is:

*How does a Head of Department navigate school culture, leadership structures and challenges to improve a subject department?*

Specifically, this project aims to respond to the following sub-questions:

1. What actions did I take to improve the staff morale of the English department?
2. What practices and procedures did I introduce so that learning outcomes in English could be improved?
3. How can Heads of Department make a difference?

## 1.6 Structure of the thesis

There are six chapters to this thesis. The first chapter provides an introduction and overview to the thesis.

Chapter two contains the literature review and is structured in three sections. The first section of the literature review focusses on the notions of distributed transformational leadership and the elements comprising the core leadership practices of establishing a vision; managing; re-designing the organisation and finally, managing the teaching and learning programme within the school. The second major section of the literature review examines the research on leadership at the Head of Department level.

Chapter three presents the research design and methodology and a justification of the selection of the particular research methodologies employed in this study. An outline of the data sources, the procedures explaining its collection and the ways in which the data analysis occurred are also presented and justified.

Chapter four contains the findings of the research organised around some key points that pertain to the data collected for analysis in this study. These pieces of data are: the Registration and Accreditation Journal; the historical report that was written by the external investigators; the survey of the teachers about initiatives implemented; the semi-structured interviews and finally, the

Professional Review. These data sources are organised sequentially and are arranged according to sub-themes coming out of the abovementioned sources.

Chapter five contains a discussion of the findings and links those findings with the evidence found in the literature. The chapter is organised around the key themes emanating from the research findings.

The final chapter, chapter six, presents a range of conclusions. The ways this study contributes to new understandings of Head of Department leadership is outlined in this chapter and recommendations for future research in this field are also outlined. The thesis concludes with self-reflection towards the end of the chapter.

## **Chapter 2 – Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter introduces some of the most pertinent literature surrounding the world and work of Heads of Department in schools. Additionally, research relating to the investigation of micropolitics and the role that various representations of power play within schools is introduced and discussed.

### **2.2 Head of Department Leadership**

The research pertaining to the Head of Department role can broadly be classified under the following sub-headings – leadership and styles of leadership; ideation and reality; an exploration of ‘leading in the middle’ or locked in the middle?; student learning and leadership; interpersonal skills required; the role that the HoD plays in school effectiveness and improvement; characteristics of an effective department; issues impacting the HoD role; collegiality; department meetings; professional identity; professional learning; transforming a department; performance management of staff; functional teams; restructuring the role; and, workplace satisfaction and workplace bullying.

#### **Leadership and Leadership Styles**

The synergistic blending of various leadership styles including transformational, instructional, pedagogical (teaching and learning) and strategic (directions and visions) is seen as important (White, 2001). According to White, these leadership styles should be blended, as the HoD should be someone who is visionary and can develop a sense of collaborative culture within the department. Linked to this is the notion that the HoD should be an excellent teacher and strategist in order to be an effective HoD (Sullivan, 1996; White, 2001). White’s (2001) research outlines how the blending of these styles is able to positively influence student outcomes. Using a qualitative, interpretive approach for examining the role of the HoD (or the Curriculum Area Middle Manager (Camm)), White framed the role of the HoD as being in four domains: instructional leader, learning area architect, curriculum strategist and administrative leader. Identification of areas in which the HoD can make a positive contribution to the learning of students is in the area of pedagogy and raising expectations that teachers have of students by ‘pushing them more’ (White, 2001, p. 144); and effectively designing the teaching and learning programme. Much of this corroborates with the work of Harris et al. (1995) who highlighted the centrality of the HoD influencing teaching and learning.

Deece (2003) argued that an essential ingredient for whole-school improvement initiatives to be enacted is the leadership of the Head of Department. This has been a key unifying factor between Australian, and British research studies (Busher & Harris, 1999; Deece, 2003). In Deece's synthesis of the research into the HoD role, he argued that the leadership style was important. The leadership found to have most effect, as argued by Deece (2003), is both visionary and collaborative in nature. The core of Deece's work was to try and fill a void in the knowledge of how leaders acquire their leadership styles and ways in which these skills are brought to bear in the school context. The research focus on 26 HoDs in two government and two non-government schools in NSW was centred on open-ended interviews (Deece, 2003). In the interviews and anecdotal feedback with the selected HoDs, collaborative and consensual leadership was important as the HoDs perceived the development of their leadership capabilities was "being innate" or having "been caught" in the form of observations of how the transformative, servant Principal led the school (Deece, 2003, p. 45). Many of the HoDs identified that they were stressed – a finding that Dinham and Scott (1999) saw as being a particular characteristic of middle leaders in schools who are between the senior executive team and the teaching staff (Dinham & Scott, 1999, 2002). Deece (2003) argued that senior executive teams need to involve HoDs in whole school initiatives as well as providing opportunities for the HoD's role to be reconceptualised. This is critical given that there is a growing trend of current educators not seeking promotions to the Principalship (Lacey, 2002) and that there have been declining levels of job satisfaction due to stress and workload (Dinham & Scott, 1999, 2002).

In a study that tried to provide a theoretical basis for the role of the Head of Department in England and Wales, the researchers argued that contingency theory and situational leadership were useful approaches to understanding how subject leaders are able to influence teaching and learning (Turner & Bolam, 1998). The study was based on the premise that the HoD needed to be an outstanding teacher and be well respected by the others in the department. Each school and department operates within different constraints and contexts and an attempt at creating a model that encapsulates the HoD role was developed. The model linked factors such as: national and local factors; school factors; knowledge, skills and personal characteristics of the HoD; subject related factors; tasks involved in being a HoD; elements in the department; methods used by the HoD; and educational outcomes. All of these factors are co-dependent.

Hamlin (1990) and Dinham (2006) argued that the leadership exhibited by HoDs is similar to that demonstrated by Principals. Thus, the character of the HoD and the Principal are seen as being important in ways in which each of these leaders deals with the staff in the school or the



department. The leadership commonalities between the HoD and the Principal pertain to the development of a collaboratively devised vision; effective management of staff; having high expectations; well-developed sense of professional trust; centrality of teaching and learning to student improvement. Essentially, these are all part of what is seen as being important in transformational leadership but with the HoD the teaching and learning element is important as well. Both HoDs and Principals need to show authentic leadership (Bhindi & Duignan, 1997). In the work of Beatty (2007) and also that of Leithwood and Beatty (2008), notions of trust and the development of social capital were common between Principals and HoDs and were important in the development of the department or school which emphasises the core aspect of learning as being about relationships. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) and Robertson (2005) argued that a challenge for schools was to encourage and nurture exceptional HoDs and to train them to be prospective school leaders so that leadership could be sustainable and developed and nurtured through leadership coaching.

Following seminars conducted with a range of middle leaders from British secondary schools, a synthesis called *The Heart of the Matter* was produced (National College for School Leadership, 2003). The compilation examined a range of practical strategies that middle leaders could implement so as to facilitate improvements in teaching and learning. There were eight broad areas identified: focus on teaching and learning; generate positive relationships; provide a clear vision and high expectations; improve the environment; provide time and opportunities for collaboration; distribute leadership and build teams; engage the community; and, evaluate and innovate (National College for School Leadership, 2003). Within each of those eight broad areas, specific strategies were suggested that would help foster the development of each of the areas. Within the synthesis, there were not only the suggestions for middle leaders but also ways in which the senior leaders within the school could support the work of the middle leaders (National College for School Leadership, 2003). Based on the premise that collaboration is one of the hallmarks of effective leadership, the strategies would be useful to implement and consider. The practical strategies connect to the central tasks of distributed transformational leadership - building and setting directions; managing people; re-designing the organisation and, managing the teaching and learning programme.

Heads of Department play a significant role in the successful introduction of school improvement initiatives. The ability of the HoD to manage people is central to the collaborative process in setting the future direction of the department (Hamlin, 1990). In his research, Hamlin testifies to the importance of the HoD possessing effective interpersonal skills and the role being one which

enabled good preparation for the Principalship. His work highlights the key role that staff management plays in effectiveness of the HoD and is important in contemporary work (e.g., Dinham, 2007a).

The transition from “middle management” to “middle leadership” occurred in 2002/2003 and required a paradigm shift for school leaders as the focus moved from being management to leadership nomenclature. Two studies that were published examined two aspects of the HoD role. One aspect of the role looked at the distinctiveness of particular subject leadership (Turner, 2003a) and the other was a review of the research on the HoD role (Turner, 2003b). There were a total of 204 HoDs surveyed where all 204 were very experienced in the role and had been in it for more than ten years. The findings applied to leadership of specific subjects (e.g. English, Maths, Science, Technology and then conclusions pertained to all subjects researched (Turner, 2003a). Turner (2003a) argued that there needed to be more research conducted into leadership of specific subject departments and that the research, up to 2003, had been limited. With regards to Heads of English within the study, there were 54 studied. Whilst the teaching and learning aspects of the study were concerned with Wales and the British National Curriculum, there were specific managerial elements that were international in their application. The importance of having an English curriculum tailored to the specific learning needs of all students that also engaged all students was deemed to be one of the most important tasks for the Head of English in this study (Turner, 2003a). Additionally, the necessity of having regular departmental meetings was seen as being an important way of sharing best practice. Finally, the provision of an effective professional development programme for staff was one of the best ways for Heads of English to develop the teachers within their departments. The importance of meetings was also a finding in several other studies (see Aubrey-Hopkins and James, 2002; National College for School Leadership, 2003; Witziers et al., 1999) and is explored in a later section.

### **Ideation and Reality**

The difference between the ideal and actuality of the HoD role and the ways in which the role can be reconceptualised was the focus of a study conducted by Collier, Dinham, Brennan, Deece and Mulford (2002). These researchers interviewed 26 Heads of Department in four schools including two NSW Government Schools and two non-government schools in NSW. As the researchers were also Principals in their schools which were studied, the research in their own school was conducted by one of the team members from outside of the school. One of the most significant findings of the study was that the majority (17 out of 26 Heads of Department) really enjoyed working with the teachers in their departments. Of this aspect, the areas of developing a sense of teamwork and

collaboration; being able to select staff for the department; and of being in a position which enabled the incumbent to exercise influence within the school context were seen as being the most enjoyable aspects to being a HoD. Conversely, the least enjoyable element of the role was the lack of time (identified by 14 of the 26 HoDs). Linked with this least enjoyable part of the role was the feeling of ‘constant workload and pressure’ (nine HoDs saw it as being important) whereas others saw the downside to the role as being responsible for ‘managing under-performing teachers’ (nine HoDs) and the remaining seven said that the interpersonal problems and conflicts were the least enjoyable aspects of being in the position (Collier et al., 2002). Some of the other challenges identified in the role included the tensions of being a middle leader where the HoD was caught in the middle between what the senior leadership team wanted and also where the HoD is an advocate for the teachers in the department. Collier and his team of researchers concluded that time was the main problem with the HoD role considering the multiplicity of demands placed upon incumbents in the role. These researchers called for a change to the nature of the role so that the HoDs could perform all aspects of their roles to the highest possible levels. The focus on teaching and learning and positively influencing the ‘core business’ of schools was considered be the main priority of the HoD (Collier et al., 2002).

### **Leading from the Middle or Locked in the Middle?**

The changing nature of the middle leadership position (inclusive of HoDs) within non-government schools in NSW and Queensland is one of the main foci of a study examining whether middle leaders are leading from the middle or if they are locked in the middle (Cranston, 2006). As with the research conducted by Collier et al. (2002), this study identified the distinct lack of research interest in the position (Cranston, 2006). The misalignment between what the role was perceived to involve and what the role actually entailed was a key premise for the study. Using a survey/questionnaire developed for the purpose of identifying particular aspects of the role, 46 middle leaders were surveyed. Of those 46 participants, 30 were from non-government schools in NSW and the remaining 16 were from Queensland schools. The survey revealed that almost all of the participants (over 90%) were satisfied in their current role (Cranston, 2006). A key component of the job satisfaction for these respondents was the amount of time they worked and also how much involvement they had in curriculum leadership. Another important aspect was how well the idea of “teams” was developed in the school (Cranston, 2006). An interesting finding emanating from the study was that only a little bit more than a third of the surveyed participants would actively seek a promotional position within a school. One of the areas where respondents indicated a lower level of job satisfaction was in the high number of hours worked. According to Cranston (2006), approximately one third said they were working in excess of 60 hours a week and about half of

them were averaging about 50–59 hours a week. The main differences between what their ideal week would have been like involved the emphasis of “strategic leadership” and “educational or curriculum leadership” whereas in their real week of work most of their time was spent doing “management and administration” and also resolving “student and staff issues” (Cranston, 2006, p. 99). These same participants commented that interpersonal skills were of prime importance as were “understandings of student needs”; “good strategic planning”; “being a good listener, organiser, manager and planner”; and importantly, possessing “a good sense of humour” (Cranston, 2006, pp. 99–100). The perception was that middle leaders were “locked in the middle” as they were required to respond to the demands of all stakeholders in education (Cranston, 2006, p. 101). The most significant finding from the study was that interpersonal skills were critical to successful functioning in the middle leadership role. If middle leaders were to move from being locked in to leading from the middle, then there needed to be a change in the nature of the position to enable the important leadership aspects of the role to not be subsumed by the administrative managerial responsibilities (Cranston, 2006).

The nexus between HoD leadership and the Senior Management Team (SMT) is an important one. An effective professional relationship is vital for the future success of the department (Francis, 2007; Glover et al., 1999; Hobbs, 2006; Sammons et al., 1996). If a department is to improve, it is necessary that the SMT be supportive of initiatives within the department. Sammons (1996) argued that the department needed to develop collaborative plans for improvement and setting of goals. The SMT needed to praise what was good in the department and also provide many opportunities for professional development and training to enhance their practice of the HoDs (Harris, 1998).

Bennett et. al (2007) identified two areas exemplifying the tension for HoDs of being caught in the middle. These two tensions relate to the expectation that middle leaders have a whole-school role but where they also needed to be loyal to their respective departments. The other tension is that middle leaders mainly work in hierarchical forms of leadership structure and yet there is the expectation that these middle leaders work in collaborative, collegial cultures (Bennett et al., 2007). One of the ways in which these middle leaders were able to reconcile these tensions was to adopt a line management approach to the teachers in their departments. This required the middle leaders to demonstrate and develop exceptional interpersonal skills (Bennett et al., 2007). One of the challenges with this was the view that they were not in a position to monitor or supervise the professional practice of the teachers within the department. This was a similar finding presented in the work by the Welsh researchers, Aubrey-Hopkins and James (2002). Another finding was the specific knowledge required to be a successful middle leader. Whilst building on the work of Turner

(2006), the need for a combination of articulated and tacit knowledge was exemplified (Bennett et al., 2007). The main basis of authority for middle leaders, it was argued, came from their expertise in their teaching subjects. Restructure within organisations was a foundational way of changing and challenging middle leaders' perceptions about their own practice. As a result, it challenged middle leaders to reflect upon their own behaviour as middle leaders (Bennett et al., 2007).

### **The Head of Department, student learning and leadership**

There is a strong connection between middle leadership and student learning (Dinham, 2006; Harris, 1995; Jacobson & Bezzina, 2008; Silins & Mulford, 2002; Zbar, Marshall & Power, 2007). The NSW AESOP study explored the interplay between student learning and leadership (Dinham, 2006, 2007a, 2008). The project identified, using case studies, the role that the secondary school HoD played in improving student outcome. The team consisted of a number of academic specialists in the subject areas researching 50 sites across NSW. There were a total of 38 schools selected for examination. The HoD role was considered to be very stressful and dependent upon effective relationships with others (staff, senior executive, students and parents). HoDs were seen to sacrifice their own teaching for the role due to the demands placed upon them. However, the role was highly valued despite the challenges of the role due to it being a position of influence on other people in the school. This was a significant finding from a report conducted into the job satisfaction and stress levels in the HoD role (Dinham et al., 2000), a finding discussed in a later section of this chapter.

Dinham's (2006) research examined whether there were particular characteristics of HoDs that were more conducive to influencing improvements in student learning within their particular contexts. These were similar findings in 2007 and 2008 research. The research defined the various influences of success as the following: "relationships", "strategy", "external relations", "organisation", "team building", "trust" and finally "vision, expectations and a culture of success" (Francis, 2007; Hattie, 2003, 2007, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2006; Watkins, 2005).

In Dinham's (2006) study, effective HoDs were seen as people with excellent interpersonal skills. They were hard working, empathetic, dedicated to their jobs and displayed strong evidence of commitment and were considered to be highly effective by their staff members. Many of the teachers within the departments led by these HoDs commented on the role model and exemplary teaching skills that these HoDs possessed (Dinham 2006) and this was also what Harris et al. (1995) and also Sammons et al. (1996) found in the UK. Linked with being a role model and being an exemplary teacher, showing interest and enthusiasm had a contagious effect on the rest of the teachers within the department (Dinham, 2006, 2007a).

In many ways, the HoDs studied in Dinham's project were considered to be well suited to the roles they occupied. They demonstrated the professional capacity to conduct their jobs with finesse as they were hard working, organised and were attentive to detail and would readily provide assistance where necessary (Dinham, 2006, 2007a). Interview data showed that teachers commented on the generosity of HoDs in sharing their resources and also in protecting them from outside distractions by removing obstacles from the teachers so that they could get on with the 'core task of teaching' (Dinham, 2006, p.69). Being excellent in external relations was also seen as an important skill for HoDs (Dinham, 2006, 2007a). These HoDs were keen advocates for their departments and took every opportunity to promote the department inside and outside their respective schools. In many respects, these HoDs were the "professional activists" that Sachs describes (Sachs, 2003; 2003a). These HoDs were well respected within their schools and by the wider community in which their schools were located (Dinham, 2006). Despite the demands and stresses within the HoD role, many HoDs sought opportunities to be involved in the wider life of the profession in the form of professional associations and other external bodies. This helped these HoDs to keep abreast of current developments within their subject areas whilst being able to critically evaluate these new developments (Dinham, 2006).

### **Interpersonal Skills and the HoD**

The importance of effective interpersonal skills for success as a Head of Department has been a common trend within the literature on HoD leadership. In an important study conducted into the changing nature of the HoD role in Queensland schools, the importance of interpersonal skills was a key finding for departmental success (Rosenfeld, Ehrich, Cranston, 2008). An important element of the research is that not only are skills in curriculum important, interpersonal skills generally, but communication skills specifically. Dinham (2006, 2007a, 2008) similarly identified interpersonal skills as being crucial for success. Rosenfeld et al. (2008), reported their research involving 12 participants from four schools in Queensland between 1999 and 2003. The main findings related to the nature of cultural and organisational change. The HoD role required re-thinking and needed to be considered as being contextually specific rather than generic and applicable to all schools. Due to the changing nature of the role across schools, there needed to be the development of particular skills. One of these was that over the four years between interviews, instructional leadership had been replaced by the managerial elements of the role (Rosenfeld et al., 2008). The importance of interpersonal skills was one of these skills deemed critical as HoDs increasingly had to manage diverse groups of teachers. Another key aspect was that learning these new skills required professional development. One of the interviewed HoDs said that the skills had been learnt by "trial

and error” (Rosenfeld et al., 2008, p. 12). If HoDs are to manage the changes in their roles successfully then they need to be able to learn the necessary skills in a planned professional learning programme – an area explored later in this chapter.

In a study conducted of 40 HoDs of English, Mathematics and Science departments in schools where there were sustained improvements in student educational attainment in England, the researchers found several important leadership aspects (Wright, 2006). Using the form of a questionnaire and focus group interviews, the findings related to emotional intelligence; academic tracking; having outstanding programmes of work for students; distribution of leadership; and the important issue of time. High levels of emotional intelligence enabled the subject leader to work well with others in the team as trust, vision, and open communication were needed in order to foster collegiality. In many ways this reflected the ideas of “power through” an area of micropolitics explored later. This echoes the work by Bishop (1998, 1999) where she found trust as being an essential ingredient in school improvement initiatives. The use of student achievement data enabled academic tracking of students to occur as changes in attainment were identified and strategies could be implemented where necessary. Outstanding units of work were essential for good teaching to occur as these were the “nuts and bolts” of what was to be taught in the classroom (Wright, 2006, p. 20). Distribution of leadership was seen as being important but it was not seen as bestowing a title upon someone. In the eyes of these subject leaders, it was where members in the department were given specific responsibilities to help the department operate more effectively. The tyranny of time was another issue in this study. Teachers needed time to work together, discuss teaching and learning strategies and develop the shared vision. Many of these issues resonate with findings of other researchers (see Bennett et al., 2003; Collier et al., 2002; Witziers et al., 1999).

### **The HoD and school effectiveness and improvement**

The importance of the HoD in school effectiveness and improvement initiatives has been the focus of some studies. Some of these studies focus on the importance of management of financial, human and capital resources as well as a possible re-conceptualisation of the HoD role (Glover et al., 1998; Hamlin, 1990). There are commonalities between what some researchers consider to be essential for an effective HoD to possess. These areas relate to the HoD’s ability to create a sense of a shared vision, developing the members of the department (and being able to manage or lead them effectively), being organised and able to monitor the departmental resources and ultimately focus on the teaching and learning process (e.g., Ainscow, 1996; Busher & Harris, 1999; Glover & Miller., 1999; Harris et al., 1995; O’Sullivan, 1996; Sammons et al., 1996; Turner & Bolam, 1998). This is

a rarity given the many ethical dilemmas faced in researching these kinds of contexts (Reynolds, 1996).

Brown and Rutherford (1999) contended that the HoD was the critical agent for bringing about effective school improvement. What they espoused was that teaching and learning improvements are achieved through an “evolutionary approach” where the importance of vision, commitment, planning, action and review are the elements required in order to do so (Brown & Rutherford, 1999, p. 229). These researchers advocated the primacy of the middle leadership team as they are the ones who are able to promote the innovative practice of teaching and learning within their respective departments. The only caveat is that it is contingent upon an effective relationship with the senior management team (Brown & Rutherford, 1999). One of the suggested ways for improvement of student performance was through the distribution of leadership, professional learning and collective review of the teaching documentation (Brown & Rutherford, 1999). The sharing of leadership, it was argued, spreads the levels of accountability between others and enables a sense of autonomy and empowerment. Professional learning is one important way in which teachers and middle leaders could develop their skills. If all of the teachers in the department engage in a review of the curriculum, it fostered a sense of ownership of curriculum material amongst the departmental members.

### **Characteristics of an effective department**

There are various factors that define an effective secondary school department (Harris et al., 1995; Harris et al., 1996). These factors included the departments had a climate of change within the school, developed a collaborative vision, effective management of resources, collegiality, evaluation and monitoring, development of teachers and minimal turnover of staff. However, the most significant finding was that the HoD must be committed to the teaching and learning process and ensure that there are good quality programmes in place that enrich the learning experiences for all students rather than a select few (Harris et al., 1995).

Sammons et al., (1996) cited the work conducted by Harris et al. (1995) as being important for understanding what characterises an effective department. In this, Sammons et al., (1996) concurred with Harris et al. (1995) in what an effective department’s characteristics include. These elements of effectiveness are: leadership, the quality of teaching and, finally, shared goals. Where the work by Sammons et al. (1996) diverged from that of Harris and her team is in the emphasis on the academics within a school, having high expectations of both staff and students, an effective senior management team (SMT), a constructivist approach to the teaching and learning process where the



student is at the centre of the learning, and finally, the involvement of parents was seen as important (Sammons et al., 1996). If the HoD and the department are considered to be effective, according to Sammons and her team of researchers, then the HoD must be actively involved in the development of curriculum and must work at its continual monitoring - a result also found to be important by Harris et al. (1995).

In a study conducted into raising the effectiveness of departments in the United Kingdom, Harris (1998) examined four departments in two schools in a qualitative, semi-structured interview approach. She found that leadership of the ineffective departments ranged from laissez-faire to authoritarian and in these departments there was no collaboratively developed vision about the work of the department, there was a lack of effective communication between the department members, poor management of resources both human and financial, and there was minimal evidence that the HoD was an outstanding teacher or role model. As outlined by Harris (1998), the key ingredient to developing a department was to enhance the quality of teaching by having a clearly defined process where the HoD actively engaged in many reform initiatives related to curriculum development. Additionally, the HoD needed to monitor and evaluate the use of departmental data by conducting an internal review about processes and practices.

The HoD is able to exert a considerable influence on the performance of the department in a similar way that Principals influence whole school performance (Busher & Harris, 1999). These researchers focussed on the HoD's leadership role and identified four main aspects or dimensions of the role. Firstly, Busher and Harris (1999) believed that the HoD has to bridge the gap between the desires of the senior staff and the classroom teachers. Secondly, the HoD was responsible for developing a sense of social cohesion and a group identity. Thirdly, there was a performance aspect to the role where the HoD needed to improve the performance of both staff and students. Finally, the role was that of representative or advocate (Busher & Harris, 1999). Departmental categorisation was an important aspect in this research. Nomenclature ranged from "federal" to "confederate" to "unitary", "impacted" and "diffuse" (Busher & Harris, 1999). The federal department was where several subjects were grouped together to make a mega-department for example, Science Faculty or Humanities Faculty. The "confederate" department was one which consisted of a number of other departments to make up a larger department but where the individual subjects in the department have their own identities. The "unitary" department was defined in terms of a single subject for example English or Mathematics. The "impacted" department was where only one subject was taught but the number of staff in the faculty was small. A "diffuse" department was one where there were many teachers from a range of different departments teaching the subject, for example,

Religious Studies. Busher and Harris (1999) believed that the importance of interpersonal skills was what could help create departmental homogeneity. These skills will also help to foster the necessary social cohesion required to have all members working together.

### **Issues impacting the HoD role**

In 1998 and 1999, two researchers from the British Midlands investigated the role of the HoD (Brown & Rutherford, 1998, 1999). Based on the premise that HoDs are critical agents in the school improvement process, the study conducted in 1998 examined the challenges involved in the role. Using structured interviews, the researchers explored eight HoDs in a range of Catholic schools in the Midlands. The findings of the study highlighted numerous obstacles to the improvement of teaching and learning within the various departments. There were several issues raised: time, constant curriculum change, lack of professional development, lack of support from the Principal and/or Senior Management Team, and finally, the absence of communication. Of prime importance within the study was the factor of “time”. All of the eight HoDs interviewed and observed, identified “time” as being a serious constraint on their ability to introduce new improvements to teaching and learning within their departments (Brown & Rutherford, 1998). The second element deemed important was the level of insecurity regarding the constant changes to curriculum. The lack of professional development opportunities at a departmental level was seen as being another obstacle to improving teaching and learning internally. The staff development days at the schools were used for whole school issues rather than for specific professional learning opportunities (Brown & Rutherford, 1998). The lack of support in the form of direction and vision from the Principal and the Senior Management Team at the school was another important issue. The final obstacle was the lack of communication between those in senior positions and the HoDs.

Brown and Rutherford (1998, 1999) found that there were also some initiatives that supported quality teaching and learning within the department: developing a departmental handbook, collegiality, using students as a way to improve standards. The development of a departmental handbook was important as it provided the department with order and consistency. Collegiality was another important lever for successful school improvement. The third area was to use students as one of the ways of improving standards. The view that parents are partners in the educational process of learning was a significant area in which HoDs could improve teaching and learning. An area identified as being important for future research was the relationship between the HoD and the Senior Management Team and also the importance of departmental documentation.

## **Collegiality**

The development of collegiality is a key aspect of effective leadership. This important element of HoD leadership was the focus of a study into the collegiality of a Science department (Busher & Blease, 2000). Based on the premise that effective leadership is based on positive relationships between HoDs and classroom teachers, the study by these two researchers built on the earlier work of Harris et al. (1998). The key aspects involved in developing the collegial culture were notions of trust and delegation; the leadership style and values of the HoD; and the ways in which the HoD developed social cohesion in the department (Busher & Blease, 2000).

## **Performance Management of Staff**

In 2002, another study based in Wales identified the ways in which HoDs enact the process of developing a culture of collaboration and also, importantly, managed the unsatisfactory performance of the staff members (Aubrey-Hopkins & James, 2002). Using semi-structured interviews, 17 HoDs were surveyed regarding their role and the challenges they faced in their leadership position. Some of the themes emanating from the research included communication; sharing of good practice; management of underperforming staff; collegiality; departmental decision-making and professional learning (Aubrey-Hopkins & James, 2002). Formal and informal communication mainly through meetings was one of the main ways in which departmental members developed the culture of collegiality, decision-making and the sharing of good practice. Aubrey-Hopkins and James (2002) argued that this management practice had a significant influence on staff engagement with their work. The main aspect that the interviewed HoDs identified as being one of the most challenging aspects of their role was the supervision and management of underperforming staff (Aubrey-Hopkins & James, 2002). For some of the HoDs, they believed that it was better to “let sleeping dogs lie” and just ignore the situation hoping that it would go away. Instead, the HoDs focussed on the positive aspects of the underperforming staff members’ work and provided more direct positive feedback on their work (Aubrey-Hopkins & James, 2002). If any form of classroom observation was introduced, according to the review, it was done so with the view to the whole department being involved in its development. In terms of middle leader authority, it was believed that the authority was borne out of the expertise and reputation of the middle leader as being an exceptional teacher. In other words, the authority that the middle leader has did not come from positional power but more from their own effectiveness as teachers. Knowledge of the subject being taught and led was another important finding from the research. The creation of a professional identity was crucial. This notion of professional identity was explored two years later (see Busher, 2005). The writers argued that there needed to be more work

on middle leaders and their role in improving teaching and learning more specifically (Bennett et al., 2003).

### **Professional Identity**

The professional identity of the HoD is an important aspect of their work. The bases upon which these identities are developed include values, trust and continuous professional development (Busher, 2005). The values of authentic leadership were deemed to be central to identity construction in the profession. Previous role models which exemplified the professional values of trust and continual self-improvement were often reasons why people chose to become middle leaders. The 10 middle leaders interviewed and shadowed in the study believed that there were six functionalities in the work of middle leaders. These areas were identified as vision; the will to use power; working with others; effective leadership of the department; engaging in arenas; and, being a successful role model for other teachers (Busher, 2005). One of the core functions of leadership is the setting of directions based upon a shared vision. This involved a strong sense of determinism and willpower but also a heightened sense of emotional intelligence as the middle leader needed to work with others to enact the vision, have power with and through others, be an example to the other teachers and to ultimately lead the department into the future. One of the challenges identified by the interviewed middle leaders was that they felt their own teaching in the classroom often suffered due to the pressures of their roles. In the observations, Busher noted that many of the middle leaders were late to their own classes due to having to resolve issues that other teachers raised with them. A benefit of this was that despite this tardiness to class it did not negatively impact classroom management (Busher, 2005). The notion of distributed leadership was a powerful influence in this study where teachers within the department all had a particular responsibility for an aspect of the department's operation. The formulation of departmental policy was through formal and informal departmental meetings. These conceptions of, and challenges in, the role have been echoed in other studies (Bennett et al., 2003; Collier et al., 2002).

### **Department Meetings**

The importance of meetings was one of the findings in a research study conducted by Turner in Wales (Turner, 2000). In the study of 36 HoDs, the most important finding from the research was the critical role that effective mentoring and shadowing practices had on the success of newly appointed HoDs. This crucial aspect of contextual professional learning cannot be over emphasised in this study (Turner, 2000). Being a reflective practitioner is a fundamental underpinning of Turner's study. Almost 56% of the surveyed HoDs believed that their experience in working with other HoDs was that each one of them was developing skills prior to formal leadership positions,

was one of the main reasons in their becoming a HoD. Another 47% said that they had become HoDs because they did not want to be like the people with whom they had previously worked. One of the important underlying issues is the interpersonal skills of the HoD in being able to effectively manage, support and care for the people in the team (Turner, 2000). One of the management practices identified as being important (according to 81% of the 36 surveyed HoDs) in developing a sense of teamwork was formal and informal meetings. Meetings, whether formal or informal in schools was also an important finding in a Dutch study conducted by Witziers, Slegers and Imants (1999) and further substantiated in the study by Aubrey-Hopkins and James (2002).

Turner (2003b) conducted a review of the HoD literature up to that point in educational leadership history. The review was based on the work of Turner and Bolam (1998) and examined the model of leadership based on contingency and situational leadership that was proposed in their earlier study. One of the important leadership tasks was the centrality of teachers in the department having formal or informal meetings so that they could share best practice. These sentiments have been echoed in other studies citing a case study (Myers, 1996) in which an ineffective English department was transformed due to the appointment of an effective Head of Department. Turner says that one of the best strategies that could be used to turnaround an ineffective department (Turner, 2003b) is to conduct departmental meetings and to appoint an effective HoD to the leadership position. The conclusions from the research were based on the available HoD literature and pertained to the issues of time, use of data, training and the monitoring and evaluation systems in place (Turner, 2003b). The lack of time to be able to do all the tasks involved in leading a subject department was seen as being an important barrier that needed to be overcome. Several other studies have commented on the time pressures involved in being a HoD (e.g., Collier et al., 2002). The use of data to track student achievement was an area identified as being a challenge for HoDs as they needed to be able to use it in order to assist students to improve. Professional learning in the form of context specific training was suggested for schools to implement. This same finding was echoed in several other studies (e.g., Busher & Harris, 1998). An effective system of monitoring and evaluating the work of the department was another area highlighted for HoDs to consider.

### **Professional Learning**

The importance of professional learning in the role of the subject leader has been a finding in a number of studies conducted into the role (see Aubrey-Hopkins & James, 2002; and Turner (2006) as examples). One such study conducted in the UK built on the earlier work of Eraut (2000) regarding the informal professional learning occurring for HoDs (Turner, 2006). The study of knowledge required in order to be a successful HoD was conceived in the form of six categories:

“knowledge of people”; “situational knowledge”; “knowledge of educational practice”; “conceptual knowledge”; “process knowledge” and “control knowledge” (Turner, 2006). Turner argued that “for teachers in secondary school, the subject department remains the most powerful influence on staff teaching a specific subject” (Turner, 2006, p. 423). As Turner (2006) studied a number of recently appointed HoDs, he wanted to identify what forms of learning had the most impact on these leaders in the role. He concluded from the interviews that the most powerful form of professional development was informal professional learning (Turner, 2006). However, Turner added that it needed to be matched with a course of formal learning (such as mentoring) in order to reinforce the informal learning (learning on the job) that occurred. Turner argued that senior leaders in schools needed to develop specific schemes in order for the HoDs to develop in their roles (Turner, 2006). The effectiveness of sending staff members out to learn about how to be a HoD in a day or a few days was questioned (Turner, 2006).

### **Functional Teams**

Functional team creation was a main lever for conducting the management function of middle leaders within schools (Witziers, Sleegers & Imants, 1999). One of the key premises of the Dutch study was that the HoD was not seen as being a middle leader or manager in the Netherlands. The HoD had no responsibility for the budget, staff or even curriculum (Witziers et al., 1999). They said that overall HoDs play a minor role in any decision-making within schools. Further to their argument, they added that ultimately HoDs were not major players within schools. This is a view shared by some of the early research from the UK (Early, Fletcher-Campbell, 1992) but one that has been refuted by the research evidence from 1998 (e.g., Harris, 1998). Rather than the HoD being the key lever for decision-making in Dutch schools, the centrality of effective teams is seen as being more important. One of the best ways to develop the team, the researchers argue, is through meeting together. The researchers commented on the importance of meetings as being one of the best methods for developing staff cohesion and developing a functional team (Witziers et al., 1999). In Dutch schools, the HoD is responsible for the level of social cohesion evident within the department. One of the findings was that “English departments were more cohesive than Mathematics departments” which they argued was due to the curriculum being less co-ordinated than in Mathematics departments (Witziers et al., 1999, pp. 299–300).

### **Restructuring the Role**

Hannay and Ross (1999) from Canada explored the HoDs using a longitudinal approach where interviews and surveys were implemented in order to collect the data, the researchers investigated two schools where there was some restructuring occurring at a middle leadership level. One of the

key findings was that the restructure led to an increase in collaboration and the development of shared leadership encouraged more teachers to try alternative ideas, ways of doing things and organisational structures (Hannay & Ross, 1999). The researchers believed, based on the evidence they collected, that the restructure of middle management positions was a useful way of changing the culture of schools. Hannay and Ross (1999) argued that it required the teachers involved to consider and reflect upon their own individual and collective goals. Once this happened, staff were encouraged to consider alternative structures to the traditional model of subject departments. One of the benefits of the restructure was that it developed increased collaboration between people who would not have done so under the traditional model. Additionally, it is one of the ways that they identified which helps develop teacher leadership within schools (Hannay & Ross, 1999). Another benefit of departmental restructuring was that it also helped the teachers to develop more effective teaching and learning programmes with assessment methods. Hannay and Ross (1999) concluded by saying that it would not have the same effect if it was a mandated model for the whole school district but rather it would be better for middle managers to develop more skills in transformational and distributed leadership to enable their teachers to work more collaboratively with each other.

### **Workplace Satisfaction and Bullying**

Building on the work of (Dinham & Scott, 1999, 2002) and the levels of job dissatisfaction and stress in the workplace, Riley, Duncan and Edwards (2009) conducted a longitudinal study into the prevalence of workplace bullying in Australian schools. The finding that 99.6% of the 802 surveyed respondents claimed that they had been bullied at some point in their teaching careers. The main perpetrators of the bullying were executive staff members consisting of Principals and Deputy Principals and other members of Executive (Riley, Duncan & Edwards, 2009). HoDs and the teachers were the main targets of the bullying (Riley, Duncan & Edwards, 2009). Bullying took many different forms: personal confrontation, reduced professional standing, workload and working conditions. Riley, Duncan and Edwards found that in all instances the main effect was on the health of the bullied target. Mental and physical health were important considerations. Riley, Duncan and Edwards (2009) also found that workplace bullying and the associated mental and physical health effects had ramifications on staff retention rates, absenteeism and work avoidance. Despite legislation being in place to diminish the prevalence of workplace bullying there are still many instances where alerting people to the legal ramifications of bullying is important. Raising awareness of the legal ramifications of workplace bullying could include the induction of new staff and as a professional development session for those already in schools. If emotional intelligence and self-awareness are key elements of the leadership repertoire of HoDs and Principals, then people in these roles would aim to encourage and develop their teachers. Likewise, Principals

should seek to support and care for their HoDs so that the teachers are cared for resulting in happier, more productive workplaces (Dinham & Scott, 1999, 2002).

Caponecchia and Wyatt (2011) wrote about the identification of workplace bullying in organisations. They provided a legal framework for exploring the increased prevalence of workplace bullying. They identified that workplace bullying occurs in the form of denying opportunities to others, excluding people from the conversations that directly impact upon their roles, not providing enough support to people in their roles, and also to setting unworkable deadlines to people so that they do fail in their roles. This echoes the three levels of “power over” and the three various levels of coercion in which leaders require the support of others. An important aspect of Caponecchia and Wyatt’s (2011) work centred on the legal framework and organisational structures that needed to exist within organisations. In essence, there has to be a complaints and grievances process in line with work, health and safety legislation. Indicators of workplace bullying included high turnover of staff, high levels of absenteeism, loss of productivity, personal costs such as mental health disorders and additional costs to the target and the organisation. There could be many legal ramifications of workplace bullying.

## **2.3 Micropolitics**

Teaching is inherently micropolitical and teachers employ a multiplicity of strategies to protect themselves from other teachers, leaders, parents and students (Blase & Blase, 2002). Malen (1995) argued that within the field of educational leadership research, the area of micropolitics has been a frequently neglected topic in the literature. In a review of the literature on micropolitics, the conclusion was that “the politics of schools has received more attention than the politics within schools.” (Malen, 1995, p. 148). At a very superficial level, micropolitics is about “intraorganisational politics” (Blase, 1993, p. 142). Ideas of micropolitics ranged from views seeing the field as being about contested goals, purposes and strategies (Blase, 1995; Blase & Blase, 1997) to being areas that are “pathologies to be healed or obstacles to be overcome” (Flessa, 2009, p. 340). Micropolitics examines the role that power (formal or informal) plays in influencing or coercing others and the management of conflict (Rinehart et al., 1998).

The most widely accepted definition of micropolitics was penned by Blase (1991, p. 11) who defined micropolitics thus:

Micropolitics refers to the use of formal and informal power by individuals to achieve their goals in organisations. In large part, political actions result from perceived differences between individuals and groups, coupled with the motivation to use power to influence and/or protect. Although such actions are consciously motivated, any action, consciously or unconsciously



motivated may have political “significance” in a given situation. Both cooperative and conflictive actions and processes are part of the realm of micropolitics. Moreover, macro- and micropolitical factors frequently interact.

In essence, micropolitics is about power (West, 1999). Questions of who has it, who wants it and how does one get it become focal points for exploring the role of power within organisations.

Bacharach and Lawler (1980), when discussing power in their model, identified four types of power – coercive, remunerative, normative and knowledge. Coercive power is about the use of threats or force. Remunerative power explores the use of material resources, or rewards whether financial or other. Normative power consists of two areas, pure and social. Pure normative power is about manipulating prestige or rituals or symbols. Social normative power pertains to manipulation of love or acceptance. At a base level, normative power is about manipulation (in the Macchiavellian sense). Knowledge power relates to the control of knowledge (in terms of withholding information from people or not communicating clearly). Bacharach and Lawler (1980) argued that the most frequent form of power use by Principals was in the normative domain and manipulation.

Bacharach and Mundell (1993) had furthered the work from Bacharach and Lawler (1980) where they argued that a theoretical lens for exploring organisational politics should be through a Weberian approach rather than a Macchiavellian viewpoint). Using an expansion of the Weberian social action Bacharach and Mundell (1993) created the “logics of action” which were the “implicit (that is, often unstated) relationship between means and goals that is assumed by actors in organizations.” (1993, p. 427). Building these logics of action into analysis of micropolitical theory, the focus was on power, but on authority and influence particularly as subsets of power. Power struggles were characteristics of where the authority sphere intersects with the influence sphere which produces the micropolitics of domination. Creation of coalitions is one of the effects of influence and authority. This is where groups band together for a common purpose to achieve common goals for all. There is an argument that macropolitical environments have an effect upon micropolitical environments as power is central to any organisation. People will always be vying for their own interests or will form groups so that their own interests are furthered. It is argued that:

Organizational politics is thus a power game; external interest groups in the environment influence the organization and interest groups in the organization use interest groups in the environment to negotiate and enact their particular logics of action (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993, pp. 446–447).

Bacharach and Mundell (1993) argued that the logics of action are useful in analyses of large organisations. Interest groups inside the organisation use interest groups from outside of the organisation to further their own purposes of influence and authority.

Blase (1993) reporting on his research into normative-instrumental leadership practices and the use of power within the organisation was characterised by two broad orientations. These orientations were control and also empowerment. Control included various categories including rewards, communication of expectations, support, formal authority, modelling, visibility, suggestion, contrived requests for advice, coercion and authoritarianism. The empowerment domain consisted purely of involvement in decision making and also authentic requests for advice (Blase, 1993, pp. 149–154).

Exploring the use of power from Bacharach and Lawler (1980) and Smeed, Kimber, Millwater and Ehrich (2009) presented a new way of approaching micropolitics within schools. The ideas of “power over”, “power with” and “power through” (Blase & Blase, 1996, p. 139; Smeed et. al., 2009, p. 26). Echoing the ideas presented in 1980 by Bacharach and Lawler, coercion is connected to the Macchiavellian notions of manipulation and the varying levels of coercion. “Power over” can result in destructive relationships within the organisation. Blase and Blase (2005) discussed various levels of coercive power or “power over”. Level 1 is seen as being “indirect and moderate aggression which includes discounting teachers’ thoughts, needs, feelings and isolating them”. Level 2 involves more “direct and escalating aggression including spying, sabotaging, making unreasonable demands and criticising teachers.” Level 3 is this most serious and includes “direct and serious aggression” entailing “lying, making threats, mistreating students, forcing teachers out of their jobs, sexual harassment, racism and workplace bullying” (Blase & Blase, 2005, p. 126). Smeed et. al. (2009) argued that “power over” is most commonly associated with men rather than with women. It is most commonly associated with authoritarian leadership styles rather than collaborative. “Power through” (Dunlop and Goldman, 1991) is associated with transactional leadership and a system of “rewards and punishments” and negotiation and co-operation between all staff members (Smeed et. al., 2009, p. 34). “Power with” (Kreisberg, 1992) is connected to ideas of shared leadership, empowerment and high levels of trust between all staff which is built through “open communication, support of staff through measures like training and time for planning. Schools whose principals use power with are democratic in ethos and structure” (Smeed, et. al., 2009, p. 34).

## 2.4 Concluding Comments

Arguably the Head of Department occupies one of the most important roles for school improvement and can be seen as an instrumental lever in improvement initiatives (Harris, 1998). Inclusion of a departmental handbook (Brown & Rutherford, 1998, 1999), facilitation of department meetings (Turner, 2000), interpersonal skills in fostering collegiality and collaboration (Busher & Blease, 2000) and management of staff performance (Aubrey-Hopkins & James, 2002) are all important for raising student achievement. Heads of Department can demonstrate many leadership capabilities similar to those of Principals (Dinham, 2006; Hamlin, 1990).

Heads of Department report having one of the highest levels of job dissatisfaction and stress (Dinham & Scott, 1999, 2002). One of the reasons for this is the prevalence of workplace bullying (Riley, Duncan & Edwards, 2009). Given that there is a potential shortage of teachers seeking positions of leadership in schools (Lacey, 2002) it is important that teachers are cared for both as professionals and as people. Another reason why Heads of Department face higher levels of stress and job dissatisfaction is because of the position they occupy within the school. They are caught between their teachers and the senior management team of the school. This creates stress in itself, as is the case with all middle management (Dinham, 2006).

The following chapter explores the research methodology and introduces the data sources and how they were analysed.

# **Chapter 3 – Research Design**

## **3.1 Introduction**

It has been argued that educational research needs to be “relevant, readable and rigorous” (Dinham, 2007b). The research which is often communicated to professionals is, according to Dinham, too frequently not rigorous in the employment of the particular methodologies, the connection it makes to readers and not sufficiently and therefore, somewhat irrelevant to their lives. The use of appropriate apparatus to qualify or quantify particular phenomena within education has to be suited to the problems under investigation. After the research has examined the big questions, it needs to be appropriately disseminated to the profession so that practitioners are able to evaluate whether the research is able to enhance their teaching and improve student learning.

This chapter examines the methodologies of the study, the research design and how the data was collected and analysed. The initial sections of the chapter relate to the current nature of educational research theoretical design followed by how this project has been methodologically framed. The final sections of this chapter outline the subjects in the study and the ways in which the data will be sourced and analysed.

## **3.2 Research Methods in Education**

### **Theoretical Frames**

The selection of the theoretical frames for conducting research is based upon many factors. Some of these factors relate to the kind of research being conducted; the researcher’s beliefs about epistemology; and, ultimately the objectives of the research in terms of explanation of phenomenon or other areas under investigation (Johnson & Christensen, 2004).

### **Educational Research**

There are many possible research methodological frameworks but also two main approaches to use in education. These two main approaches are qualitative and quantitative. However, for the purposes of this thesis, the qualitative method is of prime importance and explores the social phenomenon of education.

## Qualitative Methods

Qualitative methods relate to the analysis of non-numerical data enabling insights to be made into the area of interest or the phenomenon being investigated (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). Given the nature of qualitative research and the philosophical underpinnings embedded within, it is believed that it is 'interpretive', but according to some, it is unable to be generalised in the application of findings to all educational contexts (Minichiello & Kottler, 2009). It could be argued that with such a small selection of participants within the sample selection in qualitative research, the generalisations cannot be applied to all participants. However, it is also argued that there is the possibility for generalisations to be made (Williams, 2000). There has to be plurality of methodological approaches (Williams, 2000). He argues that the plurality of methods is more effective as the two approaches complement each other. In his research, Williams argues that within the interpretive approach to research, the researchers are well aware that they can make generalisations but there is a reluctance to admit that it occurs (Williams, 2000, p. 210). The sample size is the key factor that enables the applicability of findings to the wider population.

Qualitative forms of research seek to understand human behaviour from a holistic approach. In many ways it requires the researcher to be embedded in a particular setting and reflect/represent the viewpoint(s) of those within the particular setting (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2003; Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994). In order for the researcher to accurately reflect that viewpoint, the use of "thick description" is necessary (Gomm, Hammersley & Foster, 2000; Travers, 2001). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) refer to qualitative research as "bricolage", a term used in the field of quilt making, as "the quilter stitches, edits and puts slices of reality together" (2000, p. 5). In other words, this could be seen as being a postmodern approach to research where there is a blending, or pastiche (McLeod, 2000), of forms and formats to serve a particular purpose. In research, the purpose is the culmination of answers to particular research questions. This notion of "weaving" is discussed with further reference to qualitative research in schools and the link to the development of teachers (Fink & Stoll, 1997). Similarly, Creswell's work describing qualitative research uses the same idea as he explains qualitative research as "an intricate fabric composed of minute threads, many colors, different textures, and various blends of material" (Creswell 1998, p. 13). When qualitative researchers try to answer their questions they patch together the pieces of information from the various data sources to create a coherent work.

Within qualitative research it is possible that there is a multiplicity of perspectives or interpretations of the one event. This then makes it a complex layered event (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2004;

Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2008). Approaches in qualitative research can include ethnography, grounded theory, case studies and phenomenology (Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2008). The use of particular research methods within the qualitative approach is only limited by one's imagination (Leedy, 2001).

### **3.3 This Study**

This project employs a qualitative approach framed within the form of a teacher self-study and an institutional ethnography. I now turn to explore these research methodologies and their relevance to this study.

#### **Ethnography and the participant observer approach**

Ethnographic research is anthropological in origins as it draws on the insights and frames of meaning of those participating in the research, often called “informants” (Bernard, 1995; Chambers, 2000; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2004; Hammersley, 1990; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Morse & Richards, 2002; Walford, 2001). It is set within a natural context and examines the experiences of those within the particular context. As it does these two things, it provides an account of the setting through the use of senses. The provided narrative of the complexity and interconnections between sensory and real-life interpretations are significant. The sociological and anthropological approaches to ethnography “admits the subjective experiences of both investigator and participants into the research frame, thus providing a depth of understanding often lacking in other approaches to research” (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 9).

There are several types of participant observation (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009; Johnson & Christensen, 2004; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). These types include: complete participant, participant-as-observer, observer-as-participant; complete observer. Arguably a researcher will assume all of these roles at some point in their study of a cultural group (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009; Johnson & Christensen, 2004; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). As researcher, I was in an insider and in a position of authority in the site being studied. The ramifications of this pertain to the data collection but also to studying the behaviour and its interpretation within the particular context (Boyle, 1991). However, there is also the tendency to “maintain some distance and objectivity” (Bernard, 1995, p. 137). The participant observer approach requires the researcher to keep fieldnotes of the study conducted (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2008).

The nature of participant observation is clearly articulated by Boyle (1991, p. 277):

The researcher is directly involved in the informant's life, observing and talking with people as he or she learns their view of reality. The end result is that participant observation allows the researcher to take a particular slice of behaviour and interpret it by putting it into context.

The important aspects here of observation of people, talking with them and trying to understand their sense of reality is a crucial focus in this study. Likewise, being able to "take a particular slice" of organisational behaviour and interpret it by looking at the context in which it occurs was another focus. These elements are instrumental in the examination of my actions and organizational behaviour at the school.

As I was the researcher and a participant in the research the importance of 'eyes' and the duality of these 'eyes' needed to be evident. Addressing the pertinent issue of perspective was an important issue that needed to be resolved. The notions of *etic* perspective (an external, third person outsider's view) and also *emic* perspective (internal participants' views) are pertinent in creating a holistic perspective (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2004; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2008).

My role in this is multi-layered. I am the researcher in this study and it is my story as HoD. However, the story involves other members of the English Department and their involvement in the story was where they were involved in semi-structured individual interviews and the completion of a survey and the Professional Review. In conducting the semi-structured interviews, I had someone external to the school and to this study interview the teachers. The person also transcribed the interviews. As I was researcher and also the Head of Department, there was a power imbalance which could not influence the data or its ethical collection.

### **Institutional Ethnography**

Dorothy E. Smith (2005) developed the approach of institutional ethnography. The key aspects of this empirical approach explore the connection between power relations and how those relationships shape experience in the local environment. In many ways institutional ethnography is an extended sociological case study into power. An important result of this branch of ethnography is to understand the social organisation and develop strategies for social change activism. Institutional ethnography is the result of blending of various theoretical and philosophical paradigms including Marxist materialism, feminist theory, political and activism theory and ethnomethodology. In essence, institutional ethnography is a case study that examines the culture of an organisation and the power imbalances present within that organisation.

Smith (2005) argued that institutional ethnographic studies have three attributes: a disjuncture; a problematic; and a standpoint. Institutional ethnographic studies begin with a disjuncture between the lived experience of people within the culture and ideological accounts of the same experience. What is believed to be the ideal is vastly different to the actual lived experience. The problematic is about identifying a set of questions that directs the researcher to the lived experience of the research subjects rather than as research objects. It retains the humanity of the research participants and treats them as subjects of research rather than objects of research as some approaches reinforce. The final attribute is that of standpoints. A standpoint is a philosophical perspective and a way of analysing how everyday experiences of people within the institution are shaped by the social processes within the institution. The traditional standpoint is not from the privileged position of the ruling-class in the organisation but from the marginalised voices (Smith, 2005). The type of data that would be collected in this approach would include items of that connect to the institution being studied such as historical records and data, performance reviews and other documents which tell a story of an organisation.

### **Teacher Self-Study**

Originating within the field of teacher education where teacher educators asked students to study their own practice, the methodology of self-study is pertinent to this present study because this is the autobiography of my actions taken to improve an ailing English Department over the course of several years. Pinnegar (1998, p. 33) defined self-study as a “methodology for studying professional practice settings”. Additionally, exploring the elements of self and all aspects of the self are foundational principles in the field of self-study. Mishler (1990) outlined that teacher self-study has the following characteristics – self-initiated and focussed; aimed at improvement; interactive; incorporates multiple qualitative methods mainly but can include quantitative methods; validity is founded on trustworthiness.

The focus in this thesis is on “teacher” and “self” study. It is a study of the self and by the self. The teacher as the researcher reflects on his or her own experience in a reflective manner. The teacher as a reflective practitioner initiates the study and focuses the study upon their own practice. There is the element of the subjective which permeates the study of the self in this process (Pinnegar, 1998). Embedded within this approach is the view that it is value-laden and has a strong sense of moral purpose (LaBoskey, 2004). The study of the professional and personal selves highlight the values of the teacher researcher and the sense of why he or she believes that he or she can make a positive difference to learning. Teacher self-studies then, aim to improve the personal and professional lives of the teacher being studied (Mishler, 1990). In order to improve the practice of the teacher being



studied, there has to be a collaborative or interactive approach to the study. The employment of a “critical friend” assists in the validation of the research findings (LaBoskey, 2004).

Incorporation of multiple qualitative methods is one of the features of teacher self-study. The inclusion of narrative and the writing of the research through the use of the first person where the research is told in the form of autobiography or personal history is the most common approaches to teacher self-study (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Diamond, 1993; Zeichner, 2007). Schön’s (1983) foundational work on the reflective practitioner has been used by self-study researchers as one of the important premises of the work of teacher self-study. Reflective research done by teachers is borne out of this important work. The ability to critically reflect on practice and actions helps self-study researchers to improve their own skills in the field. As such, I kept a journal of the processes that I followed in order to document the evolution of the thinking behind the teaching and learning programmes introduced and my rationale for introducing them in the way that I did. This reflective process helped me to refine my own cogitations on the theories of learning, effective pedagogical practices and what would constitute teaching and learning programmes being underpinned by research.

### **3.4 Data Gathering Tools**

Common tools in educational research are surveys and interviews of individuals and groups to gather data from multiple perspectives. Each of these tools has advantages and disadvantages, but used collectively can minimise the disadvantages of each. These tools are outlined below, as they were main means of data gathering in this study.

#### **Survey Research**

Survey research has many benefits for the researcher in the gathering of data. It is used to collect data describing one or more aspects of a targeted population. One of the main benefits is that the collection and transmission of the survey is relatively straightforward as it can be sent/collected via regular mail or email. However, one of the most significant disadvantages is that at some times in survey research everyone responds (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2004; Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009).

#### **Interviews**

Interviews with participants are one of the easiest ways of obtaining qualitative data that (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2003). These range from structured interviews where there is no deviation

from the pre-written questions. In the unstructured style, it is essentially a casual conversation between people.

A medium between structured and unstructured interviews is in the form of a semi-structured interview (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). This is a mixture of formal interview where there are previously formulated questions but there is the opportunity for the participant to also talk and for the interview to be flexible in format. This provides the flexibility for natural talk whilst being in a formal, structured setting (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2003).

There are several important guidelines that need to be followed when conducting an interview. These mainly relate to the actions of the interviewer. The ability to listen is the most vital part of the interview (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2004; Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). Other areas that need to be considered range from asking open-ended questions, not being judgemental about the beliefs of the participants/informants, and, being able to handle silence (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). All of these areas are important considerations when interviewing. Interviewing enabled the story to be brought to the forefront, as it was the story of lived experience from individual voices. Institutional ethnography is about creating a story of a particular organisation and interviewing the participants for this research enabled a snapshot of the intellectual fabric of the English department to be part of the narrative of the lived experience of all members of the department.

### **My Data Collection Tools**

Within this study I used the reflective journal as part of recording my own experience in developing and designing the teaching programmes for the teachers to use. There was also my own lived experience and personal communication that I had received as part of my role as the Head of English at the school.

## **3.5 Participants**

In this study, the main focus is on my leadership of and the improvements within an English Department within a school located in regional NSW, Australia. The English Department is comprised of teachers with mixed levels of experience. When the project started at the school, I had been there for three months and I was aged 33. There were 17 English teachers with a variety of experience levels. Only three have been teaching for fewer than five years with two of these being in their second year of teaching and one in his first year. The remaining teachers have been teaching for more than nine. There are three teachers who are in their fourth decade of teaching and others have been in the profession for between 15 and 25 years. I was the third youngest in the department.

I had been teaching for ten years and had worked in a number of schools and had been the Head of English at a small school in Sydney, NSW. Five of the teachers have been working at the same school for more than 20 years. There were nine participants in this project. Each of the nine participants was interviewed, completed a survey on the initiatives that had been introduced and they also completed the Professional Review on what they thought of my leadership.

### **3.6 Data Sources**

Four main data sources were used in this study as they were identified as most useful in terms of analysing improvement within the English Department. They are: (1) Department Review; (2) accreditation documentation and my own reflective journal; (3) staff feedback in the form of a survey and also in semi-structured interviews; (4) a Professional Review.

#### **Department Review in 2007**

The Report that was written as a result of the Review in early 2007 was an important data source. In early 2007, the school appointed an external leadership consultant to review the English Department. This review provided important contextual information for understanding the level of unease within the English Department and also provided an explanation as to the level of poor performance within the English Department for a prolonged period of time. The Report produced by the external leadership consultants was provided to me on my commencement at the school and was available from the school. The leadership consultant conducted a national search for the new Head of English position.

#### **Board of Studies Accreditation Documentation and Researcher Journal**

Every five years the Board of Studies requires non-government, independent schools to go through a process of registration and accreditation. For many schools this involves an arduous process of document production and policy and procedures development as evidence of compliance with requirements. Board of Studies Inspectors read the documentation and then go out to the school to inspect the facilities, meet the Senior Executive or Senior Management Team (SMT) and read all the paperwork with accompanying work samples. Typically, the inspection team writes a report and provides feedback to the SMT on the quality of the work. Sometimes, there are specific comments directed at certain departments or areas within the school or there may be no feedback or comments at all.

In 2008, I was tasked with the responsibility of preparing the documentation for the English department so that it would meet the requirements for registration and accreditation. I documented

the process of development of curriculum and departmental policies in an electronic journal. This was completed as I was engaged with the process of writing the documentation. The journal outlined the processes of accreditation and provided details of my action to meet requirements and support school improvement.

## **Staff Feedback**

### (i) Faculty Initiatives Survey

The Faculty Initiatives Survey was a pen and paper, short item and check box survey containing items about initiatives that were implemented in the department from 2008. Initiatives included the following key areas: outsourcing of marking, external mentoring, teaching and learning programmes based on inquiry, organisation of specific professional learning opportunities with the Association of Independent Schools English Consultant, student study sessions on weekends with external presenters. The survey that teachers completed was centred around the improvement initiatives within the department, development of the teaching and learning programmes and also the ways in which I managed the teachers in the department. The questions were open-ended thereby enabling staff an opportunity to subjectively comment directly on the effectiveness of the faculty improvements. The Faculty Initiatives Survey was distributed to each individual staff member in their pigeonhole in the staff common room. There was a box inside the department staffroom to enable staff to submit them securely. The teachers were required to complete the survey electronically and print it off, so that there was anonymity so that I could not recognise particular handwriting.

### (ii) Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used to enable follow-up on survey responses. The questions in the interview related to the initiatives and the perception as to whether they have been sufficient and also related to my leadership. There were eight questions in the semi-structured interviews. The questions included:

- What are some of the initiatives that the HoD has sought to introduce that you have liked?
- What were some of the initiatives that the HoD sought to introduce that you did not like?
- How would you consider the effectiveness of the introduced initiatives?
- What are some other initiatives that you would like to see introduced?
- How would you describe the leadership style of the HoD?
- How supportive and approachable do you find the HoD? Are there any areas that the HoD could support you more?

- For staff who have been at the school for a long time (that is, more than five years) – how would you rate the effectiveness of the HoD in introducing change within the department?
- For newer staff to the school (that is, fewer than five years) – is this a pleasant work environment? Why? Why not? In what ways can this be attributed to the HoD?

I liaised with an external research assistant to find out suitable times for the interviews to be conducted. The research assistant conducted the interviews so that responses could be candid and unguarded as the subject of the interview was about my leadership of the English Department. The interviews were conducted at a time organised by the research assistant. The interviews were held in a location at the school that one of the teachers in the department had organised. They were also recorded and transcribed to preserve anonymity. The external research assistant recorded and transcribed the interviews and I was provided with the transcriptions in order to preserve anonymity of the participants which was an important ethical consideration. Each interview was of approximately 20 minutes. No teacher was identified in the recording of the interviews and I never received the recorded audio version of the interview.

### **Professional Review**

The purpose of this Professional Review was to assess how I progressed with regards to the various categories in the role description. In 2008 there was a Professional Review of me. The proforma used in the 2008 review was originally designed by the Principal for use with all Heads of Department as professional performance reviews. Another review was completed in 2010 with the intention of indicating improvements in leadership, management of staff, resources and the curriculum. For the sake of consistency, the format and the review itself was identical to that completed in 2008. The two separate reviews are indicated by year – either 2008 or 2010. They show the data from each respective year. It is noted that the language of the Professional Review is heavily skewed towards “management speak” as the pervasive view of “leadership” at the school was essentially that of “management” as the Principal was the only “leader” at the school.

For this study, my 2008 and 2010 reviews identified areas in which I improved in my capabilities and capacities and also, it identified areas for suggested improvement. Additionally, the Professional Review was designed in such a way that enabled a skills assessment to be completed due to the thorough nature of the Professional Review. Additionally, an analysis of the ways in which I improved over the time between reviews was completed. This was in the form of an aggregation of results. The aggregated results were available for discussion in a department meeting approximately two weeks after the review.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

#### **Department Review**

The historical data took the form of the Report produced by the external leadership consultant and his team. It provides important contextual information which is analysed for the level of academic results in the school, the level of support from senior management for the English department and finally, it provides an overview of the historical development of the English department within the school. The report was compiled using a number of data collection methods such as interviews, use of available academic data and also classified school information. The report included some recommendations for school improvement initiatives, which are mostly school-wide rather than specific to the English Department. The analysis of this report enabled a “rich description” of the antecedents within the department and might help in providing an evidence of the commencement of improvements within the department. In analysing the Department Review, I was looking for what life in the school and within the English Department was like. The Review would give a snapshot of the power relations evident within the school and the language used to describe these relations. Additionally, a philosophical standpoint would be revealed from which I could then explore the interplay between all participants in the narrative within the Review. I looked very closely at the language that been used in the Review to indicate what the actualities of life and the lived experiences of those within the department and the school were like.

#### **Board of Studies Accreditation Documentation and Researcher Journal**

For accreditation, the inspection team provided an extensive report to the English Department regarding the quality of the teaching and learning evident within the programmes. This report was summarised to provide a picture of the English Department’s compliance for accreditation. I was only able to see the comments from the inspection team as the Director of Studies had edited it. Selected extracts from the report were provided due to the confidentiality of such documentation. This documentation would provide a discourse of power and language of learning and also reveal the standpoint from which power relations could be explored (Smith, 2005). Actualities of life and how life was shaped by the actuality of power relations was essential for exploring these documents.

My reflection journal was also used to provide some reflexivity to the process of the development of the documentation. When quoted, it will be in the form of first person. Reference to the Journal substantiated the process of developing documentation for accreditation. I created the reflective journal at the time of accreditation because of the desire to document the development of the units

of work. The journal provided evidence of the development of the programmes and some of the philosophical underpinnings of these programmes. The findings by Harris et al. (1995) testify to the fact that effective departments are characterised by outstanding teaching and learning modes of practice.

## **Staff Feedback**

### Survey

The survey was an important instrument in the research process. The tabulation of the data was an important element when analysing the data. However, when each of the surveys were completed, each response to the questions had to be typed out and stored in a database. This enabled the synthesis and evaluation of the data to occur without obstacle. The reporting of items will be done as a cluster organised according to emergent themes, similar to the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews. By clustering data together, I was able to formulate ideas about how the faculty as a whole view the initiatives and also what areas are potentially seen as being important for improvements. The clustering of data was one of the key points in this research and it enabled me to synthesise the research and group the data obtained from the surveys. This is one of the pertinent points outlined by Johnson and Christensen (2004) where they said that one of the best ways of analysing the data from surveys and interviews is through clustering or grouping of the data into similar categories. This enabled me to infer key points and then provide an analysis of those points. In the analysis of the data about staff feedback I did the same as outlined by Johnson and Christensen (2004).

### Semi-structured interviews

Individual interviews were transcribed and analysed for common themes. Trends in the comments made by the participants were identified. Sub-headings were used to group the data. Individual comments made that relate to the sub-headings were combined. These then allowed me to make specific comments about the particular aspects identified as being important to the participants.

## **Professional Review**

The Professional Review is a comprehensive document designed to identify particular areas of my leadership/management. It included specific areas such as planning, management of resources, staff, students and parents. Within this document, staff were able to evaluate anonymously my effectiveness in each of these areas. Within the Professional Review, there were very specific elements that were identified as being important. The Professional Review is written with a management perspective of the role rather than that of leadership

By its nature, the Professional Review proforma is already clustered. Each participant was able to grade me on a scale of one to three. Three indicates an area of strength and a one shows an area that needs significant improvement. Each item in the review, by each participant was individually recorded and then averaged. I used this avenue as a way of analysing the data. The tabulation of each item was important, as it was used to create the average for the item. This will demonstrate a consensual valuation. This notion of clustering is central to the effective analysis of the data (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). The reporting of each of these items appeared in tabular form to help clearly identify my leadership tendencies. The table included the averages of each item as determined by the staff members.

The next chapter presents the findings from each of the data sources. Each source outlines what was found as a result of the analysis.



# Chapter 4 – Results

## 4.1 Introduction

The results in this chapter present a positive picture of what life in the English Department was like. There were many areas explored in the various data sources which paint a rich account of what the English teachers thought of the various initiatives that were introduced in order to support quality teaching and learning within the English Department. The results also show what the teachers thought of my leadership and support of them in their roles. The results presented in this chapter also provide insights into my thinking and planning for the programmes studied by the students at the school. Finally, the results indicate some of the challenges that I encountered in my leadership of the English Department at the school. This chapter presents the results from the data sources outlined in Chapter 3. The data sources consisted of historical data; the New South Wales Board of Studies accreditation documentation and accompanying researcher reflective journal; survey data from staff on the programmes and initiatives within the department; nine semi-structured interviews from departmental staff; and a performance review completed by the nine participants in this study of my particular role.

## 4.2 Historical data

### Department Review in 2007

The school had a vision and mission statement that included achieving and maintaining levels of high academic achievement. The Senior Management Team considered the HSC results from 2004 to 2006 to be of poor quality where the average number of Band 6s awarded to students at the school for English was significantly below State Average. In 2003 and 2006 there were no Band 6s awarded to students at the school. A student achieves a Band 6 if their final mark for a course is above 90%. The schools in NSW are then ranked in an informal leagues table in *The Sydney Morning Herald* newspaper. The reputation of schools rises and falls with this publication. The school funded an external consultant to investigate the students' results and to undertake a review of the entire English department. This was conducted by Pathways International Consulting and these were also the people who recruited me for the Head of English role.

The review was a seven-step process. The first step identified the terms of reference and the review goals were outlined. The second step was a Faculty self-review conducted by the Head of Department in relation to how the Faculty achieved the stated goals. The external consultants then

used this Faculty self-review when they arrived at the school to conduct the formal review. The Faculty self-review was to be completed and provided to the consultants prior to their arrival at the school.

The third and fourth steps in the review process involved the consultants attending the school, meeting key stakeholders and conducting structured individual and focus group interviews with other Heads of Department, classroom teachers, the Registrar, the Director of Co-Curriculum and also students in Years 9 and 12. This phase also included an analysis of all faculty documentation including assessment tasks and all resources such as videos, reading texts, facilities, and visits to classrooms as part of the review process. The third and fourth steps were conducted at the school over three days.

The final three steps in the review included the processing and analysis of the data, the compilation of the draft report and recommendations to the Acting Principal. The final, seventh phase of the review process saw the production of the Final Report by the end of the month in which the review was conducted. The final report (Pathways International Consulting, 2007), totaling 62 pages, was produced and given to the Acting Principal and to the School Council. There were 96 recommendations as to how the results could be improved. Of these, twenty-four were specific to the English Department but the other 72 related to whole school initiatives that the consultants considered important if the school wanted to improve the HSC results in all areas.

The recommendations specific to the English Department pertained to the areas of reducing numbers in Advanced English, introduction of new methods of text selection for the HSC English course, and a full and critical review of the programmes for Years 7–10. Specifically, the Report called for the school to reduce the number of students in the higher level of the two compulsory English courses, Advanced English. The school had strongly encouraged students to take Advanced English and the Report recommended that the school change its policy of encouraging students to take that course. The Report encouraged the faculty to develop an application process so that students would need to demonstrate academic and behavioural aptitudes in order to complete the course (Pathways International Consulting, 2007, p. 46). The Senior Management Team did not accept this recommendation from the Report and the majority of students at the school kept studying Advanced English for the HSC year.

Text selection was the second area recommended for revision. The consultants suggested that the method of text selection change from being up to individual teachers to one that is supervised by the

Head of Department in collaboration with other members of the department, and that the texts be academically rigorous and provide stimulation and challenge for all students.

The third area suggested for change in the Report related to taking immediate steps to make the programmes for Years 7–10 compliant with the NSW Board of Studies requirements. The reviewers recommended that not only were the programmes to be compliant, they had to prepare students for the breadth and depth of the HSC courses, as well as include a component of phased grammar and language skills; include a grounding in poetry, novel, drama and film texts; sequenced wide-reading lessons for the students who needed it and a wide variety of age-appropriate texts at each level where the curriculum could be differentiated.

Other recommendations made by the committee at a whole school level included the following:

- encouraging more teachers to apply for HSC marking as it is seen as being one of the best forms of professional learning for teachers;
- alter the timetable to have reduced double periods for English;
- have a consistent approach to the teaching and learning programmes by adopting a specific pedagogical model for the school (p. 47);
- reviewing Primary School English at the school (p. 47);
- recognising student achievement more fully (pp. 47-48);
- encouraging more excursions for the English Department (p. 48);
- adoption of Drama for Years 7–12 (p. 48);
- developing an Academic Support Centre for students to ‘drop in’ for assistance with writing (pp. 48-49);
- change the role of the pastoral care to include academic tracking (p. 49);
- encourage departmental review (p. 49);
- developing a performance review system that seeks to develop teachers’ skills (pp. 50-51);
- developing the professional development life of the school to focus on increasing the academic focus and culture of the school (p. 52);
- reviewing the position of Deputy Principal and having more of an emphasis on human resources (p. 53);
- making better use of the available statistics so that academic tracking can occur more effectively (p. 54);

- encouraging a system of networking so that Heads of Department and other people in leadership positions would be able to work closely with others in similar positions in other schools (pp. 54-55).

The Report was produced into a formal, confidential document and some new policy developed as a result of the Report. These new directions included a review into the Deputy Principal role, which was changed to Director of Studies (but only two and a half years later). The other main policy change was that there was a review into the teaching of English in the Junior School. This investigation was short-lived and happened three years after it was recommended. There were no other whole-school changes as a result of the Report. It appeared that the Report was not well received by staff in the English Department. Anecdotal evidence indicated that it was a catalyst for some staff to reconsider their own commitment to working at the school. Almost half, 8 out of 17 of the English teachers in the Department, left at the end of 2007. I was appointed to the school in August 2007 and started in October 2007. With almost half of the English teachers leaving at the end of the year due to the Report and a Board of Studies Inspection and Accreditation visit occurring in May 2008, my main responsibility was to ensure that the documentation was compliant with the requirements for the Registration and Accreditation Inspection by the Board of Studies and to recruit top quality teachers to fill these vacant positions.

### **4.3 Board of Studies Accreditation Documentation and Researcher Journal**

In New South Wales, every non-government (Independent) school is required to undertake a very thorough and rigorous registration and accreditation process. It is usually completed every five years and schools are required to show evidence of compliance with the NSW Board of Studies curriculum and policy documentation. This section examines the process by which I developed the curriculum documentation for the English Department at the school. This also includes a journal, which I kept as a way of documenting my development of the teaching and learning programmes.

#### **Accreditation Documentation**

My first priority following my appointment to the school was to develop and compile the documentation for the registration and accreditation process. The process of writing all of the documentation necessary took five months of writing and editing. The inspection occurred in May 2008 where the inspectors came to the school and checked all of the documentation and then met

with the Senior Management Team (SMT) to go through their findings. These findings were then reported in the form of a letter back to the school. It is common for departments not to receive any written feedback from the inspectors. The documentation that was sent for the registration and accreditation process included: (a) a scope and sequence document which summarised every unit of work with matching assessment, teaching and learning activities, resources and a link to the course outcomes; (b) a full copy of every teaching programme from Year 7 to 12; (c) copies of policies relating to department philosophy, assessment, homework and how the Common Grade Scale is to be awarded within the department; (d) a list of every resource owned by the department that is used in the curriculum; (e) samples of work from every course offered within the department.

Three guiding areas underpinned my approach to the development of the documentation. These areas included text variety, research skills development, and finally, curriculum philosophy.

#### Text variety

In developing the programmes, I wanted to produce programmes that would challenge, extend and enrich the learning of all students. One of the ways in which I sought to embed this was in the choice of texts. There are no prescribed texts for English until the final year of schooling so there was the opportunity to select texts based on student abilities and that would also engage the students in their learning. My capacity to do this was a point noted by the inspectors, who stated in their Inspection visit report: “The English programmes were terrific - there is a great variety of texts being used and a great variety of activities and opportunities being provided to the students” (personal communication, May 15, 2008).

The texts were central to each of the programmes. Each programme was organised around a central concept and the texts were used as vehicles for examining the concepts. There was a text set for study in each term. There were also texts in other modes such as film, poetry, short stories, plays and everyday texts (for example, advertisements, newspapers and other such text types). The activities which formed the basis of the units required students to work individually and collaboratively to develop their understanding of the texts and the associated issues more effectively. Additionally, these units also included embedded research skills.

#### Research skills

One of the foundational skills required for success in the final two years of school in NSW is the ability to conduct research and independent investigation. This is especially the case in the higher levels of English. From the beginning of high school English, I had sought to develop a layered

sequential approach to the development of research skills within the programmes. The inspectors commented upon the inclusion of research skills and how important they considered them to be in their report: “The Inspection Team is also particularly impressed with the way you [English Teachers] are directing students in research skills, and with how research is being encouraged and directed”. These research skills commenced with an introduction to the library in the first year of secondary school and culminated in an extensive project in the second last year of school. Through the intervening years, the development and acquisition of research skills was a very deliberate process.

### ‘What works’ in Teaching and Learning

The development of the teaching and learning programmes was based upon a very deliberate philosophical approach which placed the student at the centre of the learning experience and involved many skills such as collaborative learning and inquiry. I had conducted a significant amount of research into what makes a difference to teaching and learning. Hattie’s (2007) work on the main influences upon student learning was incorporated into the teaching and learning programmes. The inspectors commented on how evident this was in the documentation where they said: “The Inspection Team is impressed with the clear evidence that each programme has of a distinctive philosophy of education which focuses on the area of inquiry with a clear research evidence base into ‘what works’ in teaching and learning”.

The school believed that it was a significant achievement to be the only Head of Department in the school who had any comment directed to their department in the inspectors’ report. Anecdotal evidence about the revised English programmes suggested that the English teachers believed that the programmes they were teaching were outstanding. To have this confirmed by the inspectors was a significant boost to them.

### **The Researcher Journal**

During the process of documentation development for the accreditation, I kept a journal for my own reflective personal use. Excerpts reported here outline some of my reflections on teaching and learning as a broad concept, research activities for students, use of technology, and a wide range of texts catering for a differentiated curriculum, the syllabus and the requirements of the inspection throughout this time.

One of the key words in NSW in relation to curriculum and the Board of Studies is the concept of “compliance”. When I initially looked at writing the programmes, I needed to make sure that the

outcomes were all addressed. In December 2007 in the journal, I wrote, “I then developed content guidelines, which mapped the outcomes with the content requirements”. This ensured that the outcomes and the content were all being taught and therefore compliant with NSW requirements. Each of these areas is explored in this section.

### Teaching and Learning

Teaching and learning in the journal is an umbrella term that relates to programmes being engaging and differentiated; a theoretical basis and philosophy; texts and student engagement; the use of ICT (Information and Communications Technology) and professional learning and also, inclusion of research skills development. These areas were central to my development of the curriculum documentation as I wanted to have programmes that the teachers enjoyed teaching, the students found engaging and learnt a lot about and that demonstrated a well founded philosophical basis.

### Engaging and Differentiated Programmes

I had wanted to develop programmes that teachers found enjoyable to teach and that students found intellectually challenging for their own individual abilities. In order to do this, it was necessary to make them user-friendly and able to be differentiated based on the wide range of student abilities. In the journal I wrote:

The programme could include a range of activities that would suit all abilities – the differentiation of the curriculum is important at the school – we have such a wide range of students even within the one class – we need to have a curriculum so that all students can have a sense of achievement at their own ability level.

*(15 January 2008)*

Anecdotal feedback from the teachers suggested that they enjoyed the programmes and found them to be user-friendly. The programmes enabled either beginning or experienced teachers to use and adapt as necessary. All the resources were provided so that the teachers would not have to develop all the resources for their teaching.

### Theoretical Basis and Philosophy

The theoretical basis and philosophy of the English programmes was based upon specific ideas about pedagogical research into teaching and learning. Initially, I had conducted extensive investigation into effective pedagogy and explored some models. The models examined were Habits of Mind, Dimensions of Learning and the International Baccalaureate (IB) programmes. Of those three models, I regarded the IB programme as outstanding, as I commented in the journal:

The IB programmes are based on strong research evidence and an area of inquiry that corresponds particularly well to my own approaches, beliefs, values and attitudes relating to teaching and learning. I will investigate how I could potentially include this philosophical paradigm into my own teaching and learning documentation. (16 January 2008)

The IB Middle Years Programme would be excellent as a philosophical underpinning for teaching and learning programmes. In the journal I reflected that:

Particular areas of the IB MYP that are most pertinent within our programmes would be the areas of interaction (where many aspects within the MYP approach come together e.g. Man the maker, health and social education, the environment etc.). We could have a guiding question or series of questions that we would try to answer through the teaching and learning activities within the term. (16 January 2008)

Philosophical basis was an important consideration in the development of these teaching and learning documents. Once I had decided on the philosophical foundation, I wrote the programmes focussing on a student-centred approach to the teaching and learning process. It was based on the IB guiding philosophy.

### Text Choice and Student Engagement

The initial unit for Year 10 Shakespeare would have differentiated texts for different ability levels. I was very excited about the unit and wrote in my journal that:

A week later and a programme is written for Year 10 on Shakespeare. I think the students will like it. A range of different Shakespearean texts that teachers can select based on the abilities and interests of their students and themselves!! A good range of activities will help teachers to teach the texts effectively is evident within the programme. Hopefully the teachers will like it and the students will find it a good, challenging but engaging unit. (18 January 2008)

The teachers and the students did like it. In personal conversations within the staffroom with the teachers and in formal feedback from the students, there was evidence that it was well received. The students found it a challenge and felt that they had been extended. The teachers enjoyed teaching the unit as afterwards they said it was a good unit and they were able to teach a wide range of different Shakespearean texts. It was hard for me to write but knowing that the students and the teachers found it a great programme, made it rewarding to have done it.



A week or so later, I had written a unit on Travel Literature. In the journal, I recorded some reflective comments indicating my excitement but also how much the teachers thought that the unit was one that they were looking forward to teaching:

I am excited about our new travel unit. It has a nice wide range of texts about other places and the students will love them (hopefully). The teachers have already been telling me that it sounds like an excellent unit and that they're looking forward to teaching the unit. That's encouraging!  
(18 January 2008)

The students did love the texts and the teachers were highly motivated and enthusiastic in teaching it. The comments made in the staffroom indicated to me that the programme was well worth the effort in developing. Combined with the Inspectors' report, I felt that a strong vision and an exciting English programme had been developed for the school.

#### Information and Communication Technology Usage and Professional Learning

The school has excellent resources and some of the teachers use a lot of ICT within their classrooms. I knew that some teachers were reluctant to use ICT as they had indicated that they were not very confident in using it in their classrooms. Support would be partially provided from the faculty budget to pay for the professional development but the ICT Staff Coordinator would deliver specific training. With regards to the use of ICT in the programmes, I wrote in the journal:

I have employed a layered integration of ICT within the programmes. Students in Year 7 will learn about how to use the Internet in their lessons. In Year 8, they will learn how to use a video camera and video editing software. In Year 9, the students will learn how to create webpages using HTML. Our Year 10s will learn how to compose creative hypertexts with a non-linear narrative. It will mean we need to purchase some software and site licenses so that it can go on the network drive for staff and students. (18 January 2008)

Whilst some teachers found this a challenge and needed to develop skills in the use of ICT in their classrooms, there was much support in the form of professional learning which was contextual and specific to the skills required. There was an ICT Staff Integrator who would work with members of staff to assist them in the implementation of ICT within their classrooms. Opportunities were afforded to all members of the English Department to have the ICT Staff Integrator work individually with them and also collectively as a whole department on this important area.

### Research Skills Development

The Board of Studies mandates the development of research skills through the relevant syllabuses. The concept of independent investigation is an important element of the English syllabus in Years 11 and 12 but there is nothing in the junior syllabus that mentions the importance of research skills. In the journal, I wrote: “Each programme needs to have a research activity so that students learn skills in independent investigation so that they are well-prepared for their HSC studies in English” (19 January 2008). My plan was that each year group would develop specific research skills. Students in Year 7 would learn foundational skills in how to use the library and access the catalogues. This would then build up to skills required by students in Year 12 (the HSC course).

The Registration and Accreditation Documentation data is important because it indicated that the programmes that had been written were of good quality as the Inspectors believed it to be so. Additionally, my journal was a way of documenting the intention, development and realization of the teaching and learning programmes which were so well received by the Board of Studies Inspectors on their Registration and Accreditation visit in May 2008.

## **4.4 Interview Data**

### **Introduction**

The interview data presented in this section is organised around the eight questions posed in the semi-structured interviews.

### **Programme Initiatives**

The first question asked of each participant was “what are some of the initiatives that the HoD has sought to introduce that you have liked?” Seven out of the nine participants in the study indicated that the external marking initiative was deemed to have been the best. Of the remaining two participants, one believed that the organisation of context specific professional learning was the best and the other participant said that the best initiative for them was the organisation of Study Days held at the school.

### External marking

The teachers who commented on the external marking initiative viewed it in two broad areas. In one way, it was seen as being an important way for them to be cared for pastorally as the marking loads were huge and the turnaround times were short. With an average of 125 students in each year group writing six sections of about 1000 words in each section, the marking load is extremely heavy for

each teacher. The turnaround time is less than two weeks. One of the teachers summed up their view of this initiative as relating to their own pastoral care as follows: “Given the short time for turn-around between students completing the exam and the due dates for marks, it reduced the stress and pressure put on teachers who are still teaching other year groups during that time”. Another teacher who was interviewed said that for them, the external marking initiative was the “most useful initiative in looking after the staff and caring for their wellbeing”. My intention for implementing external marking was to care for the teachers in the department and to support their wellbeing. With the significant amount of marking and the tight turnaround times, I had aimed to support the teachers in their roles.

The second area identified as being beneficial to the teachers was the positive influence that the external marking had on their own teaching and learning practice. One of the teachers commented on how noticeable improvements to the teacher’s practice had been gleaned from the external marking process. One teacher, who self-identified as being inexperienced, said that the external marking process enabled the identification of “quality and weakness within student work”. For this teacher, the level of feedback on how students could improve their work also enabled this teacher to use this feedback to then tailor their teaching after the examinations in the lead up to the end of the HSC English course.

### **Introduced initiatives that staff did not like**

The second question that staff were asked was “what are some of the initiatives that the HoD sought to introduce that you did not like?” In this section of the interview, none of the participants indicated that there were initiatives that they did not like. Instead, five of the nine teachers commented on the way in which various members of the Senior Management Team (SMT) had stifled the initiatives proposed by the English department and highlighted the significant issue of workplace bullying.

### **Workplace bullying**

To contextualise the bullying by email, the process by which the workplace bullying through public email occurred is as follows. Initially the emails were fairly innocuous but the Director of Studies commenced sending emails to me and copying the English staff into these emails. Over the course of about six months, the tone strengthened in vitriol that resulted in very evident workplace bullying and harassment. The topic was invariably about an initiative or about me personally. In some cases the bullying was done in public and in front of the teachers in the department. Some examples of the kinds of emails sent include: “X is a hopeless Head of Department and should not be leading the

faculty as he has no idea”. Another example of the emails that I received and that the teachers in the department also received included:

X - you need to come to terms with the fact that you get 12 - 14 weeks holiday a year as a junior teacher (vis-a-vis 4 weeks to the rest of the entire Australian population) - if you want to aspire for more seniority then you really need to re-assess a 9.00 - 3.00 mentality and the 'no work weekend' policy I feel you have. I understand about work/ life balancing far more than you give me credit for. You do not have children... I have balanced family, health and life for years. If you aspire to a Headship you really have to re-assess your commitment. I also feel that you spend more time doing 'papers' to promote your career and research stuff than you do in doing the stuff you are employed for: TEACHING STUDENTS (personal communication, April 20 2009).

In the interviews, several teachers specifically mentioned the bullying they perceived that I had experienced. Initially the bullying occurred via email but then it spread into other forms. The bullying was not hidden and was very public. When asked about the initiatives, one of the teachers commented, “While the HoD may have beneficial initiatives to introduce, higher management will stifle these”. The perception given by teachers during interviews was that while the initiatives were well liked and considered to be beneficial, some of the key members in the Senior Management Team sought to stifle the initiatives.

One of the teachers indicated the widespread nature of workplace bullying in the school. The teacher said:

Over a long period of time the Head of Department has been bullied by the Director of Studies by email and in person in front of his teachers. He has continued to be resilient despite the continual knockbacks to our faculty. He has been successful in some initiatives, which have been so useful to our Faculty.

Another participant also commented on the level of workplace bullying in the school. This teacher indicated that

There is a real culture of workplace bullying at the school whereby the Head of English is frequently the target of very vitriolic emails and notes from the Director of Studies where she particularly tries to thwart the work of the faculty and the Head of English in particular. He has tried to take it further within the school but it falls on deaf ears with the Principal.

The teachers knew that workplace bullying was happening and that the Principal was not addressing it. This was despite me reporting it as well as others.

### **Effectiveness of the introduced initiatives**

The third question that the participants were asked was “How would you consider the effectiveness of the introduced initiatives?” When asked this question, the nine responses were spread mainly over the areas of time (six teachers commented), effective teaching (mentioned by five teachers) and the issue of workplace bullying (mentioned by four teachers) being part of my experience.

#### Time

When asked about how effective the initiatives were, one of the teachers answered that the co-curricular programme at the school was a considerable factor limiting the effectiveness of the initiatives. One teacher said:

The effectiveness of all of the curriculum initiatives was heavily constrained due to the overwhelming nature of the co-curricular programme. It means that whilst the Head of English has sought to introduce changes to the way in which we do teaching and learning, the impact of the sport and cadet programme has limited the opportunity for teachers to work together so as to develop this area further.

The co-curricular programme at the school was so expansive that it would operate every weekday afternoon until 5pm and all day on Saturday. Staff members were expected to participate actively in this aspect of the school’s life. Mandatory involvement in this programme has the side effect of limiting opportunities for staff members to meet and discuss matters relating to students and to teaching and learning. Consequently, these department meetings were held during lunchtimes.

A side effect of the issue of time within the school was the frequency that I was unavailable after school or at times during the week. This was because of my own involvement in the co-curricular programme and attending meetings for Heads of Department and also attending meetings for the professional learning committee. One of the teachers in the interview commented that: “not being available after school or several lunchtimes per week, does limit the opportunities to approach the Head of Department particularly in times of stress”. This was indicative of the pervading sense of stress and immediacy that was present in the school. Teachers were subject to high pressure throughout each of the school terms. A participant in the interview effectively summarised the nature of the school as being: “One of high pressure and high expectation. These are both placed on the individual not just by the school, but also by parents and students”.

### Effective teaching

The improvement in teaching and learning practice was considered to be an important outcome of the external marking initiative. Of the five teachers who mentioned this, where some also mentioned the importance of time, they commented especially about how it led to teaching and learning improvements.

One of the participants said that due to the external marking, he/she had been able to gain additional “insight into the topics examined as seen through the prism of experienced teachers”. For this teacher, he or she was able to learn more from the examiners about the topics or areas of the syllabus being examined. This informed this teacher’s subsequent professional practice in their teaching of English. Another participant commented on the benefit that the external marking had for the students. The importance of feedback and its link to improvement was seen as being paramount as the teacher said “it allows students to get feedback from a variety of sources and thereby helping them to improve their work”.

One of the teachers also mentioned how it was an opportunity for professional development for them:

The effectiveness of these initiatives was a relief of stress for the senior teachers, allowing more time for a concentration on the content yet to be covered or revised. The external marking provided an objective view of students’ abilities, and gave added information on weaknesses, thereby providing a professional development opportunity for the staff.

The effectiveness of the external marking, for this teacher, was in the form of enabling further consolidation of course content for the students and also in that it provided an objective view of student ability.

### **Additional initiatives**

The fourth question that the participants were asked was “what are some other initiatives that you would like to see introduced?” When participants were asked this question, all of the nine participants commented that the area of collegiality was what they would like to see introduced further. The participants added that it was already happening but they would like to have more of it in the department. Additionally, the participants said that it was dependent upon reductions in the time spent in the co-curricular programme. This was something beyond what I could control. It was stipulated in the employment contracts of all teaching staff that at least five hours of co-curricular involvement was mandatory per week. This was not something that the Director of Co-Curriculum or the other members of the SMT would re-consider.

### Collegiality

One of the teachers summed up succinctly what would be of most benefit to the department as “more collaboration would be most useful”. There was already collaboration in the development of teaching resources and also staff members willingly shared their resources with one another. This was something that could have been developed further within the department. Another participant said that further development of collegiality “would allow for greater teacher sharing and input in tasks, marking and programmes”. The suggestion that this could be addressed by organizing “internal professional development days” was seen as a way of developing this area further. As part of our department action plan, this is something that we developed. Another teacher acknowledged that the issue of time was one that had to be reconciled with the desire for increased levels of collegiality. The teacher said that

“collaboration would occur more effectively in the faculty if there was a reduction in afternoon and weekend commitments due to co-curricular programme”.

As mentioned earlier in this section, time was an impediment to the effectiveness of the initiatives and was something with which I wrestled. My experience was common among the other HoDs at the school. All sought to develop this important area more effectively. Short of meeting during the school holidays, there was no other time for teachers to meet. It was challenging finding a time to meet to discuss things affecting the department, let alone prolonged periods of time to get together and write collaboratively.

### **HoD leadership style**

The fifth question that the participants were asked was “how would you describe the leadership style of the HoD?” When participants were asked this question, all of the nine interviewees said that my leadership style was supportive and approachable. When the interviewees were asked to clarify what they thought about me as a leader, the responses highlighted several emergent themes. These themes centred on the way in which I protected staff and also how I was caught between the Senior Management Team and the English teachers. Of the nine participants in the study, five commented on the protection of staff, five on the professional and visionary leadership displayed and four on the tensions of being in the middle.

### Professional and visionary leadership

Five participants commented on their general view of my leadership style and said that my leadership was professional and visionary. For one of the interviewed participants, the teacher said,

“at all times is the leadership professional, visionary, organized and efficient”. This is something that resonated with other interviewed staff members. One of the teachers said that “the HoD is extremely professional, provides professional direction and there is an open door policy”. To this teacher, the direction in which I was taking the department was in a professional manner. The comment about the ‘open door’ pertains to my philosophy of having an open office door so that teachers could access me to discuss any issue at any time. It was also connected to the way in which I conducted my classroom. Teachers were invited into the classroom to observe my teaching practices. It was about being available to the staff to discuss matters important to them. Another teacher said “in all dealings with staff is the HoD totally professional”. Valuing of staff and their experience and opinions was something that I had sought to consistently apply. I considered it essential for the teachers to contribute to the vision for the department.

### Protection of the staff

Despite the vision for taking the department into the future there were times when staff needed to be protected and I needed to be their advocate. The teachers in the department were obviously aware of the level of workplace bullying that I was experiencing as it was considered to be an important area and several teachers commented on it in the interviews. The English teachers believed that the SMT were “against” the English teachers and me in particular and felt that as Head of Department, I was the “meat in the sandwich”.

One of the teachers in the interview stated that there was “a strong indication that the HoD does try to protect the staff”. The majority of the staff were aware of some issues from which I was trying to protect them such as the forced removal of three staff due to rumours of underperformance having been received by the Principal and the Director of Studies from two students. These students were the children of the Director of Studies who were unhappy with their marks for an assessment task. There were two staff members where there were issues of underperformance. When I investigated the issues that had been raised by parents and students, these concerns were confirmed. There was a process that I followed which ultimately ended with the dismissal of one staff member and the voluntary resignation of the other. I tried to protect the rest of the staff from the fallout as much as possible. However, the rest of the department found out as the two teachers would talk to the others. There was a destabilizing effect and some of the teachers within the department isolated me for my role in the process. But this isolation ended when the staff members left as the other teachers would tell me that they knew there were issues with those two staff members and it was good that I addressed it. There were others where I needed to inform them directly such as when the SMT informed me that there would be no Standard English course offered at the school from 2011. Other



teachers, commented that although it was noticeable I was protecting the staff and the department. One of the teachers stated that “the Head of Department is extremely knowledgeable about teaching and learning but he needs to put this knowledge to better use to be more aggressive in the defense of his Faculty”.

This can be an issue associated with being caught in the middle between being an advocate for the English teachers in the department and at other times needing to be visibly supportive of the Senior Management Team. One instance of note was when the Senior Management Team decided, without any involvement or consultation of the English staff or me on an important change in practice with regards to English classes for Year 11. This change directly involved all students in Year 11 studying the highest level of English and that Standard English would not be offered at all. This one case was not only restricted to the English department but also experienced by other departments within the school. One of the teachers summed up the distinctiveness of being caught in the middle:

There is increased stress in the faculty due to the management of the school making decisions for faculties without any involvement from the Head of Department. There is a feeling that management don't want to work with the teachers but will make decisions without consultation and then have the expectation that the faculty and its Head of Department will implement them.

According to this teacher, the result of being the ‘meat in the sandwich’ is that it produced stress in the department. From this teacher’s perspective, the teacher felt that he/she was unsupported by the Senior Management Team, as I had to introduce something that had not been agreed to by the department but had been imposed as a top-down initiative. In a meeting with the Senior Management Team who made the decision, I was instructed to be supportive of the change in practice and to convince the English teachers that it was of educational benefit to the students.

The result of this tension of being in the middle had an impact upon the low morale within the department. Two of the teachers identified it as emanating from the Senior Management Team rather than from me. One of the teachers said that: “the pressures placed on the department and the Head of Department often create an extremely unpleasant environment of stress, tension and low morale. This is not due to the HoD but the Senior Management Team”.

### **HoD approachability and supportiveness**

The sixth question that participants were asked was “how approachable and supportive do you find the HoD? Are there any areas that the HoD could support you more?” When the participants were asked this question, all nine responded with a positive response for how supportive and

approachable they found me to be. The teacher comments regarding supportiveness and approachability covered a broad range of areas. For some, they found that I was supportive with regards to parent-teacher relations, classroom management, beginning teachers, protection from senior management, mentoring and monitoring of individual staff. To be supportive and approachable required effective interpersonal skills as I could relate to staff and I also wanted to support them to be the best teachers that they could become.

### Interpersonal skills

One of the teachers, echoing the sentiments of all nine teachers said “the HoD is extremely approachable at all times and is very supportive”. Although this is one teacher, the other eight responses were all along similar lines. Each of the teachers spoke in terms of practical ways in which I was supportive and approachable. One of the teachers spoke in terms of support with classroom management and also in managing relationships with parents. The teacher said, “The HoD provides more support than normal with regards to discipline and parent-teacher relationships”. For this teacher, it was a very important area as the teacher struggled with some challenging student behaviours in the classroom.

Another two teachers commented about how they were able to feel supported. One of the teachers said that:

There has been even greater support of the teachers by his approaching individual staff as a way of mentoring and keeping track of what is happening. This gives him an overall picture of problems and successes within year groups and specific problems of individuals. This has greatly added to overall faculty morale and that there is a strong confidence in his awareness of what is going on.

The mentoring system proved to be highly successful within the English department. Overall, the teachers felt that I provided them with a lot of support and they had grown as teachers. Additionally, the teachers found that I was approachable, able to initiate change and created a positive atmosphere in the department.

### **Effectiveness of the HoD as an agent of change**

The seventh question that the teachers were asked was “For staff who have been at the school for a long time (that is, more than five years) – how would you rate the effectiveness of the HoD in introducing change within the department?”

There were two teachers who responded to this question. Each of these two participants rated me as being able to effectively initiate change within the department but there was a small caveat that they indicated. The caveat as identified by these teachers was that they perceived that my effectiveness was reduced given that workplace bullying was a significant aspect and also that the Senior Management Team would often “squash” initiatives if they [the Senior Management Team] “felt that they were not what they [Senior Management Team] would have introduced”. This result was the same as it was for the staff who had been at the school a relatively short amount of time (less than five years), where those teachers also commented that the SMT would stifle initiatives proposed and that there was workplace bullying occurring from the SMT towards me as the Head of English.

### Professional Identity

The two teachers who answered this question indicated that I was an effective change agent despite the level of workplace bullying evident to these teachers. The ability to introduce change within the department was part of my own professional identity. With regards to the implementation of change and my overall effectiveness in introducing it, one of the teachers commented specifically by saying that:

Overall the Head of Department displays a strong sense of direction, adapts to change and stays up-to-date and abreast of trends in the teaching of English at a State, National and International level. He is responsive to feedback and acts upon the suggestions of other people's ideas.

The importance of being aware of trends in state, national and international ways of English teaching was deemed to be an important part of my role. Similarly, being able to act upon the feedback provided by others and by incorporating their ideas was seen as being important. This was a way in which I valued the staff, their opinions, ideas and experience.

The other teacher, when speaking about my initiation of change, prefaced the response by saying: “Given the demands of the HoD role and the kinds of challenges faced by the current HoD and all the previous HoDs in English, I would not do his job for all the money in the world”. This teacher perceived the role to be one of significant challenge and demand that this particular teacher believed that he/she would not pursue. This was an idea corroborated by one of the remaining seven teachers who, indicated that the role was not one he/she would consider pursuing in the future.

### **HoD contribution to job satisfaction**

The eighth question that was asked of the participants was “for newer staff to the school (that is, fewer than five years) – is this a pleasant work environment? Why? Why not? In what ways can this be attributed to the HoD?” There were seven teachers who responded to this question. Each of these teachers attributed the creation of a pleasant work environment to actions initiated by me. The teachers couched it in terms of creating a positive atmosphere in the department. One of the teachers said that the HoD role was a challenging one for which they did not aspire.

### Workplace job satisfaction

The seven teachers commented about the pleasant nature of the work environment in the department. One of the teachers spoke of the level of camaraderie and its positive outcomes that it produced in terms of their job satisfaction. The teacher said that “the camaraderie of the faculty staff is positive and supportive and one where I enjoy coming to work”. The fact that this staff member said that he/she enjoyed coming to work was significant as the school frequently had high levels of teacher absenteeism.

Another teacher said that for them, when I introduced some specific ways of raising the level of morale in the department it was through,

Faculty morning teas, lunches and dinners out which for me raised my levels of job satisfaction and helped me to enjoy my job and really enjoy working with the HoD as it was an important way for us to see his more ‘personal’ side and how he cared for us as individuals and as professional educators working with him.

Another teacher commented about the nature of the welcoming environment as new staff would be accepted and also how there was a culture of sharing within the department. The teacher said that: “The atmosphere of the Faculty is generally extremely pleasant, supportive and encouraging. There is equally a sharing environment. This comes from the open door policy and a sharing of common goals. New staff members are made to feel quickly ‘at home’”.

Another teacher mentioned how I was doing a job that they themselves would not like. Also, the teacher acknowledged that I was trying to take the faculty in a positive direction but that the Senior Management Team was not supportive of the faculty or of me. The teacher made a comment about the nature of the HoD role and how unappealing this participant found the role. The teacher identified the challenge inherent in the role and said that it is not one that he/she would pursue. The teacher stated:

Despite all of the issues that our Head of Department has to deal with, we really like him and value the work he does for us and with us. He is trying to take the department into the future but this is obviously not what the SMT want as they make his life hell. I admire him for the job he does. I wouldn't want his job at all.

## **4.5 Perceptions of the Head of Department – Professional Review**

The Professional Review was developed in 2007 with some negotiation between the Principal and me. I had minimal involvement in the creation of the document because the Principal had developed it before I started at the school. It is based on the premise that operated within the school that the Head of Department role is mainly a management role rather than one of leadership. The language of the Professional Review is squarely centered on management as the Professional Review reflects the standpoint of the Senior Management Team regarding the HoD role. It was used in the first year of my employment at the school. The same Professional Review was used in 2010 as part of the research process in order to gauge whether I had improved in leadership and management capabilities and capacity. The results for the two reviews are reported in the next section. Appendix A includes a more complete presentation of the data and shows a comparison between the data acquired in 2008 and 2010.

### **Aggregated Data from 2008 and 2010**

#### ***Data set from 2008***

The 2008 data were aggregated under a series of broad headings pertaining to the roles and responsibilities of the Head of Department. There were five areas identified as relating to the role of the HoD. In no order of importance the sections were organised under the following areas: professional leadership, planning, management of staff, management of students and parents and, management of resources. The use of language in the Professional Review is based on management rather than leadership.

#### **Professional Leadership**

Of the 11 performance indicators in this area, the surveyed teachers saw this as being an area of strength. Of these 11 areas, eight were considered to be strong indicators that I was demonstrating professional leadership. The remaining three areas were identified as being areas where I was working on improving these areas. Two of the strongest areas are explored in this section.

One of the performance indicators believed to be a strength of mine was “leads by example in the classroom and staffroom”. This was based on the belief that I should be a role model for others in

all matters of professional and personal conduct as being a leader requires followers and the need to be a person of integrity and who was able to be a positive role model.

Another area identified as being a strength was “ensures that programmes and registration are current, available to staff, address the learning needs of students and reflect the school’s policies and special characteristics”. The surveyed teachers believed this was certainly evident in the way in which curriculum documentation was developed. The programmes were placed on to the computer network so that teachers could access them at any point along with the accompanying resources.

### Planning

In the second section about planning, the data indicated this was an area where I was not considered to be overly strong. Only three of the eight performance indicators in this section were considered areas of strength. Two of these areas are discussed in this section.

The sense that I had “a clear vision for the department with clearly articulated priorities” was perceived to be one area of strength. Surveyed teachers believed that I knew where the department was heading and how I would take them there. The articulation of priorities was a key item in department meetings and teachers had the opportunity to participate in the department’s direction. Along similar lines is the view that I had “goals and also plans effectively with the whole school vision in mind”. Being able to link the department’s directions with the school’s vision and strategic plan was an important part of achieving the goals set for the department.

### Management of Staff

Of the 15 performance indicators in this third section, the surveyed teachers did not believe that any of these areas were an observable strength. Instead, they believed that these areas were developing in strength. One of the areas was on my approachability. On average, the surveyed teachers believed that there were times when I was not entirely approachable. There was a feeling that, at times, they felt they could not talk to, or discuss things with me. An additional area that staff identified as a developing strength was where, according to the rating that staff gave me in the Professional Review, I “communicate[d] clearly and concisely for example, in a departmental handbook and departmental minutes”. A handbook was being developed at the time that the Professional Review was completed in 2008. Minutes of the department meetings were circulated electronically following those meetings.

### Management of Students and Parents

As my role involved working with and managing a team of many teachers, I made a concerted effort to improve on this area so that it would be an area of strength.

The fourth area was on Management of Students and Parents. Of the two performance indicators in this section, the participants believed that I “communicate[s] as required through the school’s information dissemination systems”. This was where I sent letters home to parents and also wrote a column regularly for the newsletter sent to parents electronically and on a weekly basis.

### Management of Resources

The final area of the Professional Review was on the Management of Resources. Of the six performance descriptors, only one area was deemed to be an area of strength. This area was on “manages and monitors the allocated budget”. Teachers who completed the review deemed that I was able to manage and monitor the budget well so that departmental spending was controlled, purposeful and met the resource needs.

### ***The data set from 2010***

The same Professional Review that was used in 2008 was re-used in 2010. The 2010 data showed that I had significantly improved in the reported areas in the Review. The first section of the Professional Review, Professional Leadership, was the area that demonstrated improvement. For each of the performance indicators in this section, the aggregated data showed that I demonstrated each of the 11 performance indicators as being an area of strength. The participants also regarded the performance indicators in the second section on Planning, as an area of strength. All of the eight indicators were rated as areas of strength. This was another domain that indicated improvement over the two years.

As with the 2008 Review, Management of Staff was the third section. Of the 15 performance indicators in this section, there were ten areas considered to be observable areas of strength. The remaining five areas were deemed to be working towards areas of strength. These areas included “delegates appropriately”, “positions team members effectively, and builds diverse work teams to improve quality of teaching and learning in the Department”, “encourages and motivates staff by providing constructive feedback and positive reinforcement when appropriate” and “provides assistance to beginning teachers”.

The next section of the Professional Review was on Management of Students and Parents. In this section, both of the performance indicators were deemed to be an area of strength. The final domain

of the Professional Review was on Management of Resources. The aggregated data showed that five of the six performance indicators were areas of strength. The one aberrant area considered a developing area of strength was “consults staff about resource needs”. The participants believed that there was not enough discussion about what they thought the department needed.

## 4.6 Conclusions

The qualitative data sources used in this chapter paint a picture of what life in the English Department at the school was like, not only for me as the HoD and what I did, but the teachers’ perceptions of me, of the SMT and of the initiatives introduced in order to improve the Department. Suggestions for improvement and areas to focus upon in terms of my own leadership of them were couched in terms of what could be done better, functioned as a form a professional development for me. I became determined to develop these areas even further.

In reading the data from the interviews and the survey, it gave me a “rich description” of the ways in which the teachers had been active participants in improving the English Department and the results of the students. My belief in my role as HoD centered upon the teachers and enabling them to be the best that they could be in the classroom. If an improvement of the academic results was a desired outcome, then having teaching and learning programmes of excellent quality was of prime importance to me as HoD. If I supported the teachers and removed obstacles in that obstructed their way (as best I could) then the teachers could focus on what they were doing in their classrooms everyday and I believed that was the best way to improve the results.

Experiencing the workplace bullying has had long lasting negative effects upon me. Whilst the English teachers knew I was experiencing it, there was little that they could do other than to teach well and to avoid criticism by completing all requirements of their roles. This exemplified what West (1999, p. 189) identified in that people will include “resources of power and influence to further their interests” within organisations. In my experience in the school, this was most definitely evident. Within institutional ethnographic studies the voice of the marginalized is often the voice that is unheard (Smith, 2005). It is intended that my voice and standpoint within this study are not diminished but that the narrative instead is told.

I treated the Professional Review as a form of professional development. Areas that were not strengths initially became a focus for me to develop so that they would become strengths. The language of the Professional Review is couched in “management speak” almost reflective of the



Orwellian “doublethink” reminiscent of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, but where there was little focus upon the aspects of leadership central to the role of a middle leadership position.

Within the English Department life was good. The data sources highlight that the Department was one in which many things were happening – external marking, study days for students in their final year of high school and a range of activities in order to support teacher wellbeing. As HoD I sought to care for and support the teachers so that they could be the best that they could be in the classroom. Despite the absence of support shown for me in my leadership role from the various members of the SMT, I was determined to not replicate the same level of support that I was being shown by the people who should have shown it to me.

# **Chapter 5 – Discussion of Findings**

## **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter is an analysis of the results in relation to the literature and a retrospective reflection upon being a HoD at this particular school. The first section of this chapter looks at the pressures upon my time taken in undertaking the core duties as HoD with a major teaching role. Section 5.2 provides contextual background for reflecting upon my achievements despite time pressures and it provides a backdrop for reflecting upon personal motivation for taking on the HoD role at this school. Section 5.3 explores my motivation in seeking the HoD role. In Sections 5.4, 5.5 and 5.6, three key themes that resonated with me in relation to the literature and the results gathered in this study are discussed. These themes are curriculum knowledge and expertise, aspirations of collegiality, and interpersonal skills that contributed to effective departments. In Section 5.7, my effectiveness as HoD is considered in relation to the Senior Management Team. In Section 5.8, two major findings of this study are emphasised: i) the courage to deal with underperforming staff and being resilient in being able to handle the loneliness that this created; and ii) navigating a work environment in a resilient and professional manner where the Senior Management Team provided little support and some members actively worked against me. Concluding comments are presented in Section 5.9.

## **5.2 Time to lead**

### **The roles and responsibilities of the HoD**

The HoD position is multifaceted and involves many responsibilities. Typically, the move to a HoD role involves stepping out being a classroom teacher. The HoD role includes all of the responsibilities of a classroom teacher and many more such as: teaching and learning responsibilities, pastoral care, attending and leading meetings, professional learning and professional development needs, managing and addressing staff performance, playground duty, managing student behaviour, participating in the co-curricular life of the school, reporting and assessment and also dealing with parents. The teaching role of some HoDs in some contexts varies, often in relation to the size of the department; other teacher responsibilities of HoDs are either amplified or diminished, also often in relation to the size of the department. But, leading a department and moving it forward, therefore, entails managing and leading staff, a key aspect of the HoD role. In this school, I had three core responsibilities that could be categorised as Teaching and Learning, Pastoral Care, and Staff Professional Development which are summarised below.

### ***Teaching and Learning responsibilities***

In relation to teaching responsibilities, I had an allocation of 36 teaching periods per fortnight each of 53 minutes duration. Of a total of 60 periods per fortnight, fulltime classroom teachers had an allocation of 45 periods per fortnight. My teaching load was just nine periods per fortnight less than a fulltime classroom teacher. This is a total non-contact time of 7 hours and 57 minutes to fulfill requirements of the HoD role. I taught five senior classes: Year 11 Advanced English, Year 11 Extension 1 English, Year 12 Advanced English, Year 12 Extension 1 English and also Year 12 Extension 2 English. Each of these classes involved an extensive marking allocation and also had significant requirements regarding content, skills and knowledge to be taught.

Reporting and Assessment is a significant aspect of the teaching and learning programme in any school, and syllabus requirements demand the inclusion of a regular programme of formative, summative and ipsative assessment of student learning. Marking of student work is a major role of a teacher and needs to be thorough, providing substantial feedback for students to enable them to improve. Marking student work is a very necessary, but very time-consuming task, for all teachers. As I taught only senior classes, the marking was considerable and regular. There were no less than five assessment tasks for each cohort. Preparation for these assessments required students to complete practice tasks which were marked by the teachers. It was not uncommon for an assessment task for the cohort of 15 Year 12 Extension 1 English students to take over 10 hours to mark that included detailed feedback. For Year 12 Extension 2 students, marking would require at least one hour per assessment in which to read and annotate their work.

At this school, reporting occurred every term for each year group. This involved a lengthy process of setting outcomes for each year group's reports, importing the assessment data from Excel to the reporting program, assigning a grade from A – E based on grade boundaries established by the Academic Committee, and finally proofreading the reports. Teachers were assigned a buddy to peer check the reports, corrections were made. Aside from writing reports for my own students, I also proofread all department teachers' reports. Reports for pastoral care and also co-curricular for each student were also written each term. As I was also a pastoral care leader for one group of students and this was an extra level of reporting required.

An additional teaching and learning responsibility that a HoD takes on is the expectation to be an expert in the curriculum area that he/she leads. It is at this level that a HoD takes a leadership role in Teaching and Learning beyond that of a classroom teacher. HoDs have to have good experience as

classroom teachers and demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the syllabus and the content to be taught. It was this previous knowledge and expertise that supported me in preparing the English programmes for the Registration and Accreditation process (discussed in Section 5.3), which was an initial responsibility over and above classroom teaching.

### ***Pastoral Care***

All members of staff at this school were required to participate in the pastoral programme by taking a Tutor Group. This role required giving regular advice to students and teaching a pastoral care programme to support student wellbeing. Each classroom teacher and each HoD had a Tutor Group. Pastoral care with Tutor Group meetings took place every morning for 20 minutes. This meant that my first task everyday was to meet with my Tutor Group.

All classroom teachers and HoDs at this school did playground duties to ensure that there was appropriate duty of care supervision for students. Each teacher was allocated four duties per fortnight and each HoD was assigned three duties over two weeks. Some of these were before and after school or during the morning tea or lunch breaks. Playground duties for me occurred on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday and were at various times of the day. This impacted my availability to meet with staff during break times.

At this school, participation in the co-curricular life of the school was mandatory for all teachers and HoDs. It was specified in the employment contract for all staff members. Co-curricular activities occurred on Monday through to Thursday afternoons after school until 5pm. Additionally, the sporting programme occurred on a Saturday. Some of the sports required travel to other schools and to schools in the Sydney area (about 300km away). I was involved in the coaching of sporting teams. In the summer, it was rowing and in winter it was rugby. This entailed extensive travel in order to meet sporting commitments. In 2008, the co-curricular sports that I coached required holiday responsibilities in the December/January break. This meant that I had limited time after school to meet with staff, as well as limited time on weekends.

Parent-teacher interviews are a reporting mechanism on student progress. At this school, parent teacher evenings were conducted both at the beginning of the term and in the second week of the term. They took place over two consecutive nights. The first parent teacher evening started at approximately 1.30pm and ended by 9pm. The following day the interviews started at 3.30pm and ended at 9pm. To ensure that all parents had the opportunity to attend a meeting, if required, this same arrangement was repeated the following week. This whole process was repeated twice in the

year. Additionally, I had frequent meetings with parents on various other occasions including concerns about a teacher, concerns about their son/daughter and how he/she was performing in English and also what more could be done to improve the learning of their son/daughter. This was consistent and encompassed all teachers in the English Department. Beyond the scheduled parent-teacher interviews, the HoD in this study had regular meetings with parents during the school day, organised for when he was not teaching or on a Friday afternoon after school as the HoD was involved in the co-curricular programme from Monday to Thursday. Discussing student progress with parents was also via email and phone conversation.

As a teacher of specific classes, I was directly involved in reporting to parents in this manner at these times. As English is the only compulsory subject for all students from Year 7 – 12, parents valued their child's progress in this subject.

Supporting teachers in managing behaviour was an expectation of HoDs at this school. Teachers would send students to the HoD for appropriate supervision (as a form of timeout) or as a behaviour management process. There were always a few students per day sent to me for any combination of those areas. If I was teaching at the time, the students would sit in my classroom and complete the work set by their teacher. In addition, there were times when more significant classroom management issues occurred that took considerable time to resolve such as student bullying and complaints against a teacher. Dealing with student behaviour and supporting teachers in this enterprise was a frequent demand on my time.

### ***Staff Professional Development***

There were regular meetings to attend as a teacher and as a HoD. All staff attended a K-12 staff meeting held after school twice a term. There were also meetings held during lunchtime for pastoral care, departments and co-curricular. The only regular meetings were faculty meetings. HoDs at this school were required to attend Academic Committee meetings at lunchtime as well as this was the only time that all members of the Committee could attend. I was also a member of the Professional Learning Committee and these meetings were held at lunchtimes on other days that were available. Meetings were for staff professional development as well as administration of school policy and procedures. Beyond meetings specifically set up by me for staff in his Department, my time was limited in attending school meetings.

In summary, undertaking the role of HoD at this school was time demanding. I taught one class less than the classroom teachers but was required to fulfill all typical classroom teacher responsibilities

as well as all of the management functions of the HoD role. The time for working directly with teaching staff, and supporting and promoting department improvement was seriously limited. Prior to appointment at this school, I had been the Head of English at another, smaller school. Given the time constraints upon fulfilling the responsibilities of the HoD, it is worth reflecting on my motivation for the role, which is discussed in the next section.

### **5.3 Motivation to become a Head of Department**

The HoD role requires navigation between being a leader and also being a peer (Bennett, 2007) and it can be a very lonely role (Dinham & Scott, 1999, 2002). Turner (2000) reported that of the 56% of the HoDs he surveyed stated they became HoDs themselves due to being inspired by a HoD with whom they had previously worked. The question is, why do some people aspire and desire to become HoDs?

In reflecting upon this question, there were many reasons why I sought that leadership position. I wanted to be in a curriculum leadership position from when I first started teaching. Others saw that I had expertise in curriculum and I wanted to be able to share that expertise and passion for student learning with colleagues. I taught integrated curriculum units in one school and saw the educational benefits of them in relation to greater levels of student engagement that were fostered. When I was able to secure a curriculum leadership position at this school, my ideal was to inspire the staff to teach an exciting and innovative curriculum. Upon appointment to this role, I put practices in place to build my department's teachers' knowledge of, and expertise in, curriculum. My values resonated with my educational philosophies of pursuing academic rigour based on a culture of high expectations and support – both of students and of staff. Turner (2000) found that many HoDs take on such positions due to having been inspired by a HoD with whom they had previously worked. This was one of the reasons why I pursued this leadership position. I once worked with a HoD who mentored me and encouraged my skills in curriculum, staff management and leadership so that I could apply for a HoD position and fulfill that career goal. I learnt a lot from this mentor regarding how values are central to leadership and to lead other people in an emotionally intelligent and empowering manner. The mentor embodied what the I wanted to become.

In this study, I had several goals when I was appointed. Of high priority was the Registration and Accreditation of the school's English programmes, which needed to be completed and prepared for the Inspection visit. This was a significant undertaking and was completed within six months of commencing employment at the school. However, there were other goals that I wanted to achieve.

As there were eight new teachers who started three months after I was appointed, I wanted to develop a culture within the department of collegiality and collaboration so that teachers could work together and therefore improve their collective efficacy. Additionally, I wanted to contribute to the professional learning of the teachers in the department. My vision was of making a contribution to the education profession as a whole by working with the teachers and assisting them to achieve their professional goals and hence raise the profile of the English department in this school. Turner (2000) found that whilst the HoD role is demanding and time consuming, given the teaching and associated aspects of the role, it is a rewarding role. Despite the demands on his time, I found the role rewarding in many respects. A major reward was recognition of my knowledge and expertise discussed further in Section 5.4 This was probably an intrinsic and personal reward rather than a professional reward, as acknowledgement of this major achievement did not come from the Senior Management Team.

## **5.4 Knowledge and expertise for an effective department**

### **Curriculum Knowledge**

Sammons (1996) and Turner (2003a, 2003b) have stated that outstanding knowledge of the syllabus is the specific curriculum knowledge that HoDs need to possess. Bennett et al. (2003) have stated that the HoD must possess outstanding subject specific knowledge. Thus, the HoD must not only know the curriculum but must also know the academic discipline that he/she teaches. Turner (2003a), in relation to English, states that the cross-curricular nature of English and the associated literacy skills requires expertise of Heads of English that are not required by HoDs of other academic disciplines. All of this knowledge would support the development of quality teaching programmes.

As I needed to write the teaching and learning programmes for the Registration and Accreditation process, I needed to write programmes that were compliant with the various syllabus documents. I demonstrated a detailed knowledge and understanding of the *Stage 4 and 5 (Years 7 – 10) English Syllabus* and also the *Stage 6 (Years 11 – 12) English Syllabus*. These two documents outline the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that every student is required to be taught in NSW schools. The Registration and Accreditation documentation consisting of the teaching and learning programmes and procedural documentation prepared by me was closely aligned to these syllabus documents. The accreditation documentation reflected my capacity of being fully conversant with all requirements of the syllabus in relation to content, skills and assessment. My curriculum

knowledge enabled me to write the programmes for the Registration and Accreditation process, and enabled these documents to be prepared in a timely manner. The Inspectors commented on the rigour of the academic programmes as they deemed the documentation to be ‘terrific’. I also demonstrated that I possessed a thorough knowledge of English Literature, as I was able to select texts that were engaging, academically rigorous and diverse so as to cater for the learning needs of all students. The feedback from the Inspectors on the Accreditation documentation strongly suggested that I achieved this. Additionally, the feedback from the teachers was that the texts were engaging and that they enjoyed teaching the selected texts.

The nature of English as a key learning area in the school curriculum has changed considerably. In the past, English teaching was about close analysis of novels, plays, poetry and Shakespeare with regards to plot, characters, setting, themes and so on. Current school English syllabus documents are based on multiliteracies, and hence the teaching of English is multifaceted. It is a close study of text, critical study of text, representation of concepts within texts and the techniques used to show those concepts and also the study of films, novels, plays, poetry and Shakespeare. From a multiliteracies perspective, English is about reading texts, and the world is considered to be a text. Studying the written word is no longer the sole focus of the English curriculum but now includes the modes of reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing/representing. A key aspect of English teaching is not only about texts but cultural studies and the ways in which texts have been received in a variety of different contexts.

Development of literacy skills in students is a key function of being an English teacher. Contemporary approaches to English teaching emphasise the importance of critical literacy and multiliteracies. *The Board of Studies Stage 6 English Syllabus* (1999) identifies that teaching students to be critically literate is a key outcome of the NSW English Syllabus documents. I embedded cross-curricular literacy skills through research and critical literacies in the integrated teaching and learning programmes. The feedback provided by the Inspectors on the Registration and Accreditation documentation (the teaching and learning programmes) attests to the integration of literacy skills in the English programmes.

Having rigorous and robust English programmes, does not guarantee appropriate implementation. Brown and Rutherford (1998) stated that an indicator of an effective department is that the HoD ensures that the implementation, as stated, of documentation occurs. My first step in this process was to make the newly designed programmes readily available and accessible to staff where they could access it anywhere and anytime.



The survey data provided evidence that the centrality of the documentation was one of the significant improvement initiatives within the department. These programmes were placed on the network drive so that all English teachers could access the programmes. Follow up and support of staff for implementing the programmes was a key driver in many initiatives that I implemented. Bennett (2007) and Harris (1995) stated that one of the hallmarks of an effective department is that good quality teaching programmes are in existence. In this study, it was seen that I had high levels of expertise in curriculum that fed into high quality teaching programmes. The programmes were praised by an external body and the staff appreciated their accessibility.

### **Teaching Expertise**

Research has shown (e.g. Collier et al., 2002; Dinham, 2006; Harris, 1995; Turner & Bolam, 1998) that an effective department is lead by a HoD who is an effective teacher and who leads by example. Indeed, Bennett et al. (2003, 2007) found that the HoD should be regarded by the teachers within the department as an outstanding teacher. Further, the importance of the HoD exhibiting outstanding pedagogical knowledge is of paramount significance to the development of effectiveness within the teachers in the department. The collected data in this study supports the assertion that I was considered to be an effective teacher within the classroom. For example, in the Performance Review, the teachers in both 2008 and 2010 were asked to rate the degree to which I “lead[s] by example in the classroom and the staffroom” on a scale of one (low) to three (high). On both occasions teachers rated this quality as three, thus indicating this was perceived to be an area of strength.

I was keen to support teachers to improve their effectiveness so that together everyone in the English department could be effective. Bennett et al. (2003) identified the primacy of professional learning as the means for supporting teacher effectiveness. I supported teacher professional learning through implementing an open door policy applied to classroom practice. Hattie (2003, 2007, 2009) identified that classroom observations have a positive impact on student achievement. I encouraged all staff to visit my classroom and observe me teaching. I promoted this as a form of peer mentoring and classroom observations within all teachers in the department. It was part of fostering a culture of shared practice within the department and valuing expertise and experience of teachers rather than observing for in a performance management capacity. In the interviews, two teachers commented on the effectiveness of the open door policy. One teacher said “there is equally a sharing environment. This comes from the open door policy and a sharing of common goals”. I modelled the open door policy to the staff and some teachers availed themselves, despite time

constraints, to see me teach. Initially, when I raised this with the English teachers, this was misunderstood by some of the teachers as they felt they were being ‘watched’ and that their performance was going to be scrutinised. However, after some open and honest discussions with me, the teachers were willing to allow me and other English teachers into their classrooms to observe them teach. They also went into each other’s classrooms and found the practice to be mutually beneficial.

## **Summary**

In summary, knowledge of the discipline and expertise in teaching appeared to put me in a strong position for building an effective department. When I arrived at the school, it quickly became apparent that change was required. An external review identified an underperforming English department and made a series of recommendations for improvement. Staff turnover had been high prior to my appointment. Brown and Rutherford (1998) espoused that the HoD is a key driver in implementing curriculum change. Turner (2006) states that for this curriculum change to occur, the HoD must have the necessary knowledge in order for it to occur.

Harris (1995, 1998) and Wright (2006) have argued that a department can change from being ineffective to being effective through having high quality teaching programmes that are used in the classroom by teachers. The Inspection Team who reviewed the programmes written by me provided a written report that endorsed the quality of the new programmes. This then provided the teachers in the department with confidence in the programmes. This appeared to be the starting point in the process of beginning to turnaround the department.

## **5.5 Collegiality for an effective department**

### **Development of Collegiality**

An effective department is one built on collegiality (Bennett et al., 2003; Brown & Rutherford, 1998, 1999; Francis, 2007; Harris, 1995). Studies examining the role of the Principal and the way in which he/she develops a culture of collegiality within the organisation, argue that trust and effective interpersonal skills are foundational to this process (Bishop, 1998; Fennell, 1998; MacBeath, 2007; West, 1999). This notion is supported by the work of Collier et al. (2002), Deece (2003) and Hamlin (1990) who all contend that HoDs “catch” the leadership skills of the Principal and then emulate and incorporate them into their own professional practice. The development of collegiality is as central to the role of Principal as it is to the role of the HoD. I wanted to develop collegiality to

improve the effectiveness of the department. Data shows specific practices that I put into place made positive inroads to fostering collegiality.

I sought to develop the relational trust in the department through building effective relationships with each member of staff in the department. I did this through my own professional conduct and by being a person of integrity by not gossiping and being consistent in what I said with what I did. Communication needed to be open, honest and two-way. This area was considered to be a noticeable strength by the teachers in 2010 when the Professional Review was completed again. This aspect of relational trust was developed through a process of one-to-one conversations. I wanted to know each teacher in the department. I met with each English teacher three times per term. An appointment was made with each teacher where I would ask the teacher about how that teacher was achieving their professional learning goals, any challenges that the teacher was facing in their teaching, any particular teaching and learning strategies that the teacher wanted to implement and anything else that I could do to support the teacher more in his/her role in the department. This finding concurs with the postulations by Wright (2006) in that conversations within departments must be founded upon principles of being open and honest. Interpersonal skills of the HoD are discussed further in Section 5.6.

### **Faculty meetings as a way of developing collegiality**

Aubrey-Hopkins and James (2002), Busher (2005), Hannay and Ross (1999), Turner, (2000), and Witzgiers et al. (1999) discuss the importance of faculty meetings as a way of developing collegiality within a department. Hannay and Ross (1999) stated that meetings enable sharing of best practice and facilitate teachers within a department to try alternative ideas in their own teaching. Further, they have stated that faculty meetings are also a way of challenging the organizational structures within schools. Bennett et al. (2007) agree with this assertion, however, extend the Hannay & Ross (1999) position by saying that sometimes, organizational structures can inhibit the development of collegiality, as schools by their nature, are generally hierarchical. This was clearly the case in this study site. Time was a considerable issue as meetings needed to take place at lunchtime, which was not long enough or conducive to in-depth discussion about issues raised. Turner (2000) found that faculty meetings were most effective if they focussed on matters of teaching and learning, rather than dealing with administrative matters.

In the present study, I sought to develop more collaboration within the department by changing the way that faculty meetings operated. When faculty meetings were held, a draft agenda was circulated to the English teachers where they could have input into items they wanted on the agenda. On the

day before the meeting, the final agenda would be circulated. Times were allocated to each agenda item. A standing agenda item was discussion of teaching and learning strategies being used by teachers. At this time, the teachers were invited to discuss specific strategies that they were using in their classrooms and to comment on their effectiveness. As such, faculty meetings focused solely on teaching and learning issues; administrative matters relating to departmental planning were circulated via email only. The Professional Review in the present study correlates with the importance of faculty meetings. In the 2010 Professional Review, the teachers surveyed said that I was able to communicate effectively with them through the minutes of the faculty meetings. In 2008, the teachers did not consider that to be a significant area of strength. I was diligent in ensuring that this part of the department was operating smoothly and the feedback from staff suggested this was the case.

### **Contribution to the Department's Operation**

As a means of further fostering collegiality in the department, I wanted to give staff greater direct input into the running of the department. In their research on effective departments, Busher and Harris (1999) found that collegiality was fostered when teachers were given responsibility for contributing to the department's operation. In this study, I did this primarily through the appointment of Year Co-ordinators. Each Year Co-ordinator was given responsibility for a particular Year group. Their role description was published in the Department Handbook. The Year Co-ordinator was responsible for ensuring that assessment task notifications were distributed, marks collated and recorded, and they were to implement innovative pedagogies into the programmes to improve them. These Year Co-ordinators were responsible to me and I had regular meetings with Year Co-ordinators. These meetings were in addition to the one-on-one conversations that occurred throughout the department. Over the time that I was at the school, the work of the Year Co-ordinator resulted in a smoother, more efficient running department. The distribution of leadership enhanced the operation of the department.

### **Department Handbook**

A practice at the school was a Department Handbook. The purpose of the handbook was to establish common, shared practice and to outline the way in which the department would operate with regards to staff expectations, teaching and learning philosophies, allocation of grades and how these would be determined. There was an expectation that each HoD at the school would write a Department Handbook and have all of the operational and philosophical matters contained within it. It was intended to be used by staff on a daily basis for their own guidance. Brown and Rutherford (1998, 1999) stated that one of the ways of raising collegiality was through the introduction of a

handbook. As a Department Handbook was not available when I arrived at the school, it needed to be written. I wanted to have a Handbook that reflected the teaching philosophies that I brought to the Department and to share the new programme features and innovations with staff, as well as new operational procedures. I regarded the Handbook as a vehicle for communication with staff about my leadership style and approach and vision for re-invigorating and improving the English Department at the school. According to Wright (2006), the use of a departmental handbook is evidence of an effective department. In the Performance Review, the teachers indicated that between 2008 and 2010, I was able to improve the quality of the Department Handbook. In the English Department Handbook, I had all of the policies regarding assessment, text selection, media and Internet usage and operational matters which included the school's approach to teaching and learning. I first wrote the Department Handbook in 2008 and there was no input from the teachers into its development. However, between 2008 and 2010, there were multiple times when the Department Handbook and its contents were the basis of the faculty meetings. It was one of the ways in which I sought to develop a shared practice and also develop the effectiveness of the teachers within the department. I used the Handbook regularly and referred staff to it to promote their use of it. Increasingly, staff were observed to consult the Handbook and thus it became a useable living document and integral to the operation of the English Department. A Handbook, therefore appears to be an extremely important companion for a HoD in leading an effective department and establishing a set of common practices.

### **Summary**

Data in this study showed how I developed my expertise in promoting collegiality in the English Department at the school. Beyond making time to meet all staff individually and to listen to their personal career aspirations, I put practices in place to foster collegiality, a mark of an effective department. Through the incorporation of faculty meetings, sharing leadership by enabling others to be responsible for English teaching to particular year groups and through the use of a Department Handbook, I developed the culture of collegiality within the Department.

## **5.6 Interpersonal Skills for an effective department**

### **Personal traits**

Interpersonal skills are central to effective leadership. Studies on the importance of emotional intelligence have been applied to the role of Principal and also the HoD role (Dinham, 2006, 2007a, 2008). There are some interpersonal skills considered to be essential for HoDs. These skills include: caring and being supportive, being a good communicator, hard working and dedicated, generous in

sharing resources and also, being a good listener. A key finding of this study is that the HoD needs to possess the personal trait of courage. The trait of courage does not appear in any of the literature and this study demonstrates the significance of this personal quality.

Busher (2005), Cranston (2006) and Wright (2006) all said that the HoD must be a good communicator and that the communication that the HoDs have with members in their departments must be open and honest. I developed relational trust through my interactions with each teacher in the department by conducting regular one-on-one conversations with teachers in the English department. The Professional Review considered this to be one of my strengths.

Dinham (2006, 2007a, 2008) identified hard work and dedication as being important attributes of HoDs. Cranston (2006) found that HoDs work an average of 50 hours each week. I wrote a Department Handbook and also prepared all of the teaching and learning programmes for the Registration and Accreditation process. The teachers surveyed in Professional Review in both 2008 and 2010, found that the Department Handbook was well received by teachers and also used by them on a regular basis. As discussed in Section 5.4, the work that was required in order to produce the documentation was shown. Although no direct staff feedback was gathered in relation to this trait, the time taken to produce all the documentation and the Department Handbook exceeded this. In addition to the expectation of lesson preparation, marking of student work and co-curricular involvement. I achieved programme accreditation within six months of my appointment and my work received high praise from the Inspectors in the Registration and Accreditation process. I was always willing to make time to talk to staff, worked hard to implement initiatives to improve the Department's effectiveness (for example, peer mentoring and classroom teacher observations).

Dinham (2006, 2007a, 2008) found that an important skill of the HoD was that the HoD generously shared resources. A way that I was able to share resources was through enabling the teachers to have ready access to the teaching and learning programmes so that the teachers could teach. The fortnightly faculty meetings were also important ways in which I facilitated the sharing of resources and practice. Resources developed by me between meetings were also placed on the computer network along with the teaching and learning programmes. I strived to model generosity so that a culture of sharing and collaboration was fostered. These resources were used by the English teachers in their teaching of the programmes as the in the Professional Review in 2010 the surveyed teachers said that the resources were useful that I developed and shared.

Cranston (2006) stated that an important skill for a HoD is that of being a good listener. In order to support English teachers, and as one teacher said, “An overall picture of problems and successes within year groups and specific problems of individuals” required me to be able to have effective listening skills. I needed to listen to what the teachers were saying and not always seek to provide solutions but to work collaboratively with each teacher to solve whatever issues were raised. For example, I took some pride in being a good, active listener, and this trait was corroborated through the interview data. An example of this was when one of the English teachers was finding classroom management difficult. My support of this teacher required me to listen to the teacher and together there was a resolution to the issues. The classroom teacher, in the interview mentioned that: “The HoD provides more support than normal with regards to discipline and parent-teacher relationships”. To be able to support this teacher effectively required good listening skills.

### **Building Morale**

Bennett (2007), Busher and Harris (1998), Cranston (2006), Dinham (2006, 2007a, 2008) and Turner (2000) state that one of the most important interpersonal skills of HoDs is that the HoD supports the teachers in their departments. I demonstrated that I possessed this important interpersonal skill. In the interviews, a teacher commented that “The HoD is extremely approachable at all times and is very supportive”. Being supportive to the teachers extended to parent-teacher relationships, to classroom management of students and to an internal departmental mentoring system. In the interviews, one of the teachers commented on how I cared for the teachers in the department.

I sought to build collegiality in the department through encouraging staff to participate in morning teas and lunches. I also organised dinners out. One of the questions in the interviews pertained to whether the work environment was a pleasant one and also if it could be attributed to the HoD. The seven teachers who responded to that question said that it was a very positive department in which to work. One of the teachers in the interview stated that:

Faculty morning teas, lunches and dinners out which for me raised my levels of job satisfaction and helped me to enjoy my job and really enjoy working with the HoD as it was an important way for us to see his more ‘personal’ side and how he cared for us as individuals and as professional educators working with him.

This teacher commented that I supported each of the teachers within the department and the ways in which they were valued as professionals and as people and how enjoyable the workplace was for this interviewed teacher. This was important to me, as I wanted to treat each teacher as a valuable

human resource who could contribute to the department and to the teaching profession as a whole. The interpersonal skills of being respected, caring, dedicated and hard working are identified by the interviewed teacher and are echoed by Dinham (2006) as being important.

Another teacher, in the interview reported that the English Department was pleasant and that there was evidence of the department being one where there were resources being shared and a level of generosity and sense of common goals. The interviewed teacher said that:

The atmosphere of the Faculty is generally extremely pleasant, supportive and encouraging. There is equally a sharing environment. This comes from the open door policy and a sharing of common goals. New staff members are made to feel quickly 'at home'.

For this interviewed teacher to identify the department as being supportive, pleasant and encouraging was a key goal of in my leadership of the department. To be able to do this required me to be able to work well with others, a finding echoed in Busher's (2005) research.

### **Courage of the HoD**

Aubrey-Hopkins and James (2002), and also Bennett et al. (2003) discussed one of the not-so-pleasant aspects of the HoD role which is to manage underperforming staff. They described how many HoDs will take a "let sleeping dogs lie" approach rather than having the courage to address the issue. They said that the HoDs in their studies attempted to address the poor performance of staff but many decided that they would not pursue it due to a variety of issues including: the domestic situation of the teacher, the age of the teacher who is underperforming or for concern of alienating the teacher. In this study, I had the courage to perform this difficult responsibility. This is a key finding in this study and adds to the extant literature on the HoD role. Courage is very important because teachers play a vital role in student learning (Hattie, 2003, 2007, 2009). If HoDs are committed to student learning, then the HoD should not have a "let sleeping dogs lie" approach to the underperformance of teachers within their respective departments. Student learning is crucial for any school and the HoD should intervene to ensure that student learning is not thwarted by poor performance of teachers. It is not pleasant and does require the HoD to demonstrate courage. This study shows the significance possessing courage when dealing with underperformance of staff within my department.

In the Professional Review section, between 2008 and 2010 there were measurable improvements in my management of staff. There are two sections that point to this area. In one section it "fosters an open, honest two-way communication" and this is about the ability to have difficult conversations centred on improvement of practice and performance. Similarly, the section on "encourages and



motivates staff by providing constructive feedback and positive reinforcement when appropriate” is about managing performance. It has been outlined previously that I had regular one-on-one conversations with each teacher in the department. This process included having difficult conversations about performance when necessary. I would meet with individual staff members to discuss performance and provide feedback and motivate them to improve. It was based on the premise that open and honest communication was essential. This is also a finding in the interviews where one of the teachers commented that: “The HoD is extremely professional and provides professional direction and there is an open door policy”.

Having a good relationship with the teachers in the department through the previously established one-on-one conversations and by building staff morale within the department enabled difficult conversations to occur. This became a key feature in the way in which I addressed issues of underperformance in two staff members. One of the teachers was the Head of Religious Studies who also taught English. There had been many parent complaints about the teacher’s curriculum knowledge and pedagogical skills. This teacher was dismissed following due process. The other teacher was a fulltime English teacher and he also had significant problems with his curriculum knowledge and teaching practice. This teacher improved but did leave a year later. Contrary to the findings of Aubrey-Hopkins and James (2002) I confronted the underperformance rather than “let sleeping dogs lie”.

This was a key aspect of professional and personal growth for me in this role. It was part of the role that I found challenging and I needed to be courageous as I addressed these issues with the two staff members. I wanted to create a collaborative and collegial department but my professional values of the importance of quality teaching and its influence on student learning was the overriding factor in me confronting the underperformance of the two teachers. This study found that addressing the underperformance of staff did have an effect on faculty cohesion and also isolated me for a short period of time. However, it also became a way in which departmental cohesion was strengthened. The teachers were aware of the underperformance of the two teachers as they were in the same staffroom as the rest of the teachers and once the two teachers had left there was greater cohesion in the department.

## **Summary**

I was seen to have interpersonal skills that enabled me to be supportive of the teachers in the department. A variety of data sources indicate that I was considered to be a good communicator, hard working and dedicated, generous in sharing resources, and was also a good listener. These

interpersonal skills were important in assisting with the development of a collegial and supportive culture within the English Department. I actively worked towards building morale through social events and encouraging people to come to the staffroom at tea breaks. I demonstrated courage to deal with underperforming staff in the department. This was not an easy path but was considered a vital measure for improving the department. Courage is not a highly elaborated interpersonal skill that is mentioned in the literature and seems to be somewhat overlooked. This aligns most directly with Bennett (2007) who discussed the issue of navigating the role of both peer and leader, and contributes to the loneliness of the role (Dinham & Scott, 1999, 2002). There is a balance between being a leader and being a peer but stepping into the role of a HoD means that a line is drawn. It requires courage and suggests the importance of resilience as an interpersonal attribute for a HoD.

## **5.7 Leading from the Middle**

Dinham and Scott (1999, 2002) state that an effective Senior Management Team and Head of Department relationship is critical for the success of the department. The HoD role involves working closely with the Senior Management Team and this relationship needs to be based on trust. The Senior Management Team and the Principal must also support the HoD in particular (Francis, 2007; Hobbs, 2006; *National Centre for School Leadership*, 2003; Turner, 2006). As a middle leader in the school, I sought to have an effective relationship with the Senior Management Team. However, this was not reciprocated by some members of the Senior Management Team. Whilst support upwards and downwards is the ideal in leadership, it is not the only aspect that contributes to an effective department. I managed to make the English department work effectively and this appeared to have been due to my expert curriculum knowledge, and teaching practices as well as my interpersonal skills. As identified by the National Centre for School Leadership (2003) and Hobbs (2006), the Senior Management Team must support their HoDs so that the HoDs can reach their potential and perform their middle leadership role. In this study, despite the absence of downward support from the Senior Management Team, I was able to keep working effectively in leading the department. Further, the National Centre for School Leadership (2003) study argued that the Senior Management Team must actively support HoDs rather than detract from their important work. However, as was the case in this study, some members of the Senior Management Team would often block the work that I did in leading the English Department. In a word, bullying describes the way some staff of the SMT interacted with me in this study.

### **Bullying by Senior Management Team**

This study clearly identified an issue of workplace bullying of the HoD by the Senior Management Team. The research by Blase and Blase (2005) resonates with my experience in this area. The

notions of power and coercion as being ways in which authoritarian leaders operate was my lived experience at this school. Initially the approach that was used by some members of the Senior Management Team would be rated at Level 1 and I thought nothing of it. Soon, it escalated to Level 2 and then to Level 3 which took the form of workplace bullying and intimidation. Personal communication to me from the Director of Studies clearly pointed to my experience of workplace bullying. Caponnechia and Wyatt (2011) reported on workplace bullying as occurring in the form of denying opportunities to people, not giving people enough support in their roles, and setting people up for failure by not providing sufficient information so they could conduct their roles. Riley, Edwards and Duncan (2009) found that there were high incidences of staff bullying occurring within Australian schools. In their study, 99.6% of the 802 surveyed teachers had experienced workplace bullying at various times in their teaching careers. They found that the main targets of the bullying behaviour were classroom teachers and also the middle leaders (HoDs), with the perpetrators being the Principals and/or Deputy Principals.

In the present study, the teachers were aware that I was being bullied by some members of the Senior Management Team and the Director of Studies in particular. However, teachers in the English department did not see me as a bully, as evidenced by interview data collected in this study. Riley, Edwards and Duncan (2009) found that in independent (non-government) schools, bullying most often occurs via email. In the interview data, one of the teachers commented that my lived experience of workplace bullying was evident in the form of emails as emails from the Director of Studies were often sent to all English teachers as well. This teacher commented that: “She [the Director of Studies] particularly tries to thwart the work of the faculty and the Head of English in particular”. Whilst this interviewed teacher did not know the full extent of the bullying, the teacher knew that it was a way that the Director of Studies, as a key member of the Senior Management Team, was limiting opportunities and support of me and of the English Department. According to Caponnechia and Wyatt (2011), and Riley, Duncan and Edwards (2009), this is an example of workplace bullying.

Caponnechia and Wyatt (2011) and Riley et al. (2009) concur that the indicators of a workplace bullying culture is that there are high levels of absenteeism, mental health disorders and not being able to retain staff. At this school, as a result of the stress and pressures placed on me and the incidence of bullying behaviour demonstrated by the Director of Studies and other members of the Senior Management Team, I suffered from mental health issues necessitating some time off work. The final outcome was my eventual resignation from this school six months after final data collection for this study. Because of the lack of support and persistent undermining of all the

initiatives that I strived to implement, I actively sought (and found) a new position of leadership at a much larger school in a different location. I perceived this as an unfortunate outcome given the rapport and collegiality I had built with staff in the English Department but it was also regarded as the only avenue open to me for my own personal health.

This reinforces the importance of having programmes in place to prevent the level of workplace bullying. Studies by Caponnechia and Wyatt (2011), and Riley, Duncan and Edwards (2009) address the importance of educating workers about workplace bullying and ensuring that staff members were not demonstrating behaviours that were construed as bullying or intimidating or a manipulation of power. Additionally, those researchers indicated that if a staff member raises workplace bullying as an issue, it needs to be addressed and sorted out. Despite me raising the bullying with the Principal, the Principal did not pursue it any further. One of the teachers in the interview said, “He [me] has tried to take it further in the school but it falls on deaf ears with the Principal”.

Working in these conditions required me to be courageous in my role and also to be personally resilient. I protected the teachers within the department and the teachers were mostly unaware of the issues that I was facing, especially the mandates from the Senior Management Team that were a distinctively different change in the direction of the department. My courage in addressing this with the English teachers was of prime importance.

## **5.8 Key Findings**

This study demonstrated my capacity to successfully lead a department within a school through having personal characteristics, a strong vision and strong curriculum knowledge and expertise, as identified in the extensive literature on school leadership. This study contributes to the existing literature but also adds to the extant research on educational leadership in the following areas. There are two key findings emerging from this study that are not so well reported in the literature: courage required by the HoD to confront and manage staff performance; and, persevering when the working relationship between the Senior Management Team and the HoD is ineffective. Both these situations point to the importance of resilience and courage as character traits in leadership.

### **Courage of the HoD – Managing Staff Performance**

An examination of some role descriptions for the Head of English position does not indicate that part of the HoD role is to manage the performance of a department’s staff members. Yet, in this

study, I felt compelled to do this for student learning and department effectiveness. This present study builds on and extends the work of Aubrey-Hopkins and James (2002). I could not do nothing with the underperforming staff but instead confronted the underperformance of the particular staff members in the department. An important philosophical belief of mine was that underperforming teachers have negative impacts on student learning and teachers need to be held accountable for their professional practice. Hattie (2003, 2007, 2009) argued that teachers contribute approximately 30% towards student achievement. Thus, an underperforming teacher negatively affects student achievement.

As student learning is a central aspect of any school, it is vital that when quality of teaching declines, action is taken to remedy the situation. Teachers, as professional educators, need to have student learning at the centre of what happens in the classroom. When this does not occur, for one reason or another, the HoD has to act. Support of the teacher is important but so too is student learning. One of the short-term consequences of managing underperforming staff was that it isolated me from the rest of the English teachers in the department resulting in noticeable negative reactions from the staff towards me. However, this was reasonably short lived. There was improvement of one staff member and the other left the school. The improvement of the teacher was reasonably short lived. He had been put through the performance management process and had improved for a bit. However, it became evident that he was underperforming again as there were complaints from both parents, other teachers and also from students. He was given very tight timeframes to demonstrate improvements. Once those timeframes had been established and that the teacher could not show visible positive changes and was forced by the Principal, Director of Studies that he should look for another job in another school. His resignation followed the next day. For both teachers the process that was followed is identified below. The challenge was that the teacher was also a HoD. The teacher taught English and for both classes there were many complaints. I had to address these complaints as student learning was a priority. The process resulted in the teacher being dismissed. This was difficult for me as I had a role to play in the dismissal of another HoD and also supervised the teacher with the packing up of the teacher's belongings on the day that the teacher was dismissed. Anecdotally, teachers in the department commented about how the department had improved and that the 'negativity' had gone after these events.

Addressing the underperformance of staff can be fraught with many challenges and difficulties. I followed this process in addressing the underperformance of the staff members:

- Complaints were made by parents and/or students directly to me with the teacher. If there were additional complaints, I informed the Principal and the Director of Studies. This entailed lengthy discussions about the strategy for addressing the complaints.
- The complaints and the teacher's actions were documented and given to the Principal and Director of Studies for the staff member's file.
- Additional complaints were addressed by me with the Principal and also the Director of Studies.
- A meeting between me, the Principal, Director of Studies and the teacher took place. This meeting was documented.
- I observed more classes, checked student work samples and reported back to the Principal and Director of Studies. The meeting involved discussion about how to approach the next phase.
- I met with the teacher to discuss the findings. This meeting was documented.
- If the complaints were unfounded the Principal would speak to the teacher.
- If the complaints were founded then the Principal, Director of Studies and I would invite the teacher to a meeting.
- The teacher was given the opportunity to have a support person of his or her own choosing in the meeting. The Principal, Director of Studies and the teacher would have a conversation. The support person would be silent in the meeting and take notes for the teacher. The support person was usually the Independent Education Union representative within the school. This meeting was documented. I was the one who took notes.
- The Principal and Director of Studies would run the meeting with the teacher and the support person. I would always be present. The meeting would involve the Principal indicating timeframes for improvement, measures of improvement and necessary professional learning to be completed. This would be a warning that the teacher's employment could be in jeopardy. The process was always ratified by the legal advisers at the Association of Independent Schools. A copy of the warning letter was sent to these people, to the teacher and to me. A copy was placed in the teacher's file.
- If it was the third warning that the staff member received there was an option of resignation or termination of employment. In order to save face and the fear of dismissal, a teacher would commonly resign before being dismissed.

This process was lengthy. It took several months of continually referring back to the Association of Independent Schools (AIS) to ensure that "due process" was being followed at all levels. It was stressful for all parties involved. It required me to be open and honest with the teacher who was

facing the challenges and simultaneously be supportive of the teacher. I needed to work with the teacher and but also have a good relationship with all teachers. There is a strong indication from the interview data that the surveyed teachers believed this was the case. This required very good interpersonal skills for navigating difficult situations.

### **Navigating a working relationship with SMT**

Busher (2005) stated that HoDs had to create a professional identity based on values, trust and continuous professional development. Busher's study explored how the HoDs created their professional identities. Their biographical backgrounds and values were important to the development of their identities. Busher reported HoDs' beliefs about why they chose to become teachers and leaders and these included a love for their subjects, teaching role models of other teachers in the formative years of schooling; their own social backgrounds and the belief that, as teachers, they could make a difference to the learning of the students in their classes. Whilst the context in which I was working was at times very challenging, I was able to maintain a professional identity in the face of adversity.

I supported the various SMT members who created challenging circumstances for me. My values helped to sustain me when faced with adversity as I sought to perform the role. These values were that I believed that I needed to be supportive of members of the SMT in front of the teachers. It was based on the belief that I needed to work with the SMT and lead the teachers too. Part of being a middle leader is that to the teachers, the middle leader needs to be supportive of the senior leaders. The teachers did not know entirely what was happening to me because I did not think it was appropriate to share that information with the English teachers.

An important aspect that motivated me during the adverse circumstances was the reinforcement from the NSW Board of Studies Registration and Accreditation process that the work submitted for the Inspection was highly praised by the Inspectors. To me and to the English teachers, the positive feedback provided the incentive to persist with the improvement in teaching and learning programmes. It was being able to control and monitor the quality of the programmes that helped to motivate me. The belief of making a positive difference to the education of students that was one of the key motivating factors that sustained me.

Additionally, the supportive and caring environment developed and fostered by me in raising staff morale, relational trust within the department, and the high level of collegiality within the

department helped to sustain me. I was able to navigate the relationship with members of the SMT so that teaching and learning was perpetuated as a priority within the department.

### **Summary**

There are two issues regarding the HoD role. Firstly, Dinham and Scott (1999, 2002) identified that the HoD role can be very lonely. Secondly, Bennett (2007) stated that the HoD role requires navigation between being a leader and also a peer. This chapter outlined how the role is both lonely and one that requires navigation.

The HoD role can be lonely due to the nature of leadership and making tough decisions (Dinham & Scott, 1999, 2002). I had to confront the underperformance of staff. There were times when this was very isolating for me. The process outlined earlier in this section was lengthy and initially it did make my position lonely. Additionally, with the workplace bullying, the teachers did not know the full extent of that which was happening to me. I could not be unprofessional and talk to the teachers about what was unfolding for me.

Navigating between a leader and a peer involves knowing when to be a leader and when to be a peer (Bennett, 2007). As a leader, the responsibility for writing teaching and learning programmes and also policy documentation was my domain. Ensuring that meetings were about teaching practice and that one-on-one conversations occurred was part of my leadership role. Leading the teachers and being supportive of the teachers and ensuring the workplace, despite it being busy and stressful, was a place where the teachers wanted to be. Being a leader and confronting the underperformance of the two teachers required me to be courageous and resilient.

I was also a peer. I was an English teacher and I was required to fulfill my responsibilities in the classroom and be an effective teacher. The distribution of leadership in the Department where teachers were given responsibilities for leading particular year groups, was a way in which I was a peer.

## **5.9 Conclusion**

This chapter outlined the challenge of time to lead as the HoD role involves many responsibilities and challenges. The HoD is expected to have excellent knowledge of the curriculum and be an expert teacher in their subject area. The development of collegiality within the department is essential for a cohesive team of teachers. I was able to develop the collegial nature of the



department due to my interpersonal skills which fostered a culture of support and care within the English Department. This study has two key findings. These findings are: courage to confront underperformance of teachers within the department; and, navigating an effective working relationship with the SMT when there are challenging circumstances such as manipulation of power and workplace bullying and intimidation.

# Chapter 6 – Conclusions

## 6.1 Introduction

This study provided an account of my role as a leader of an English Department within a large school. I have offered a picture of my lived experience with the time pressures I had which included an extensive teaching load. It also showed my tasks undertaken at a leadership level when I taught one less class than a typical classroom teacher. In this study, my expertise in curriculum and pedagogy, my capacity to build collegiality, and my interpersonal skills were seen to contribute to my effectiveness as a HoD. Prior to commencement at this school, the English Department was regarded as underperforming. The research data reported here showed how I managed to turn the English Department around and create an effective department and essentially make a difference as a leader. Not only was I seen to change and improve learning, but data, particularly in the form of the Professional Review, showed that as HoD, I developed my own leadership capacity as well. My effectiveness as a teacher and leader was supported by the existing literature as many of the practices that I performed I did innately. However, this study highlighted three broad areas that are not so well reported in the literature. These areas include: managing staff performance; development of resilience for Heads of Department; and, maintaining professionalism in the face of adversity. I will now discuss each of these in turn.

## 6.2 Managing staff performance

Heads of Department need to manage the performance of the teachers within their departments. Hattie (2003, 2007, 2009) stated that teachers make a significant contribution upon student learning, therefore, a poor teacher can negatively impact student engagement, participation and achievement. I had to actively address the underperformance of two staff members although performance management contrary to what is reported in the literature (Aubrey-Hopkins & James, 2002; Bennett et al., 2003). These researchers indicated that many HoDs may not actually address the issue of underperforming teachers within the department. In this study, I addressed the performance of the two teachers. My philosophical belief in the primacy of student learning was my motivation. It was a difficult time for me to know how to specifically deal with underperforming staff. Questions that I asked included some of the following:

What, and when, is the tipping point for pursuing performance management measures?

How long is too long for seeing any improvement in performance?

How do you address the performance issues whilst also maintaining the working relationship?

I grappled with these questions by dealing with this issue, rather than avoiding it. It was a significant moment of personal and professional growth.

### **6.3 Development of resilience for Heads of Department**

HoDs need to be resilient and able to bounce back when encountering challenging circumstances. The Middle Years of Schooling literature focuses on the development of resilience in adolescents, but as seen in this study, this also appears to be a key for HoDs. Newhouse-Maiden et al. (2006) stated that having effective coping strategies, social networks, and positive role models are strategies for developing resilience in leadership. My resilience was demonstrated through remaining professional in spite of workplace bullying. One of the ways I built resilience was through networking opportunities in the professional associations and where I freely and openly discussed ways in which I was challenged professionally and personally. I also sought professional advice and developed more effective coping mechanisms including exercise and mindfulness training. I obtained and could obtain support from colleagues about how to manage the situations that I was encountering (e.g., Dinham, 2006; Newhouse-Maiden et al., 2006).

### **6.4 Maintaining professionalism in the face of adversity**

Busher (2005) stated that the creation of a professional identity is essential for HoDs. In this study I was seen to have a strong professional identity as a leader who could remain strong, and continue to perform my role in the face of adversity. I continued to perform the management and leadership functions of my role. My curriculum knowledge, my capacity to develop collegiality, my interpersonal skills enabled me to get the English Department to work collaboratively. As a result, student results were seen to improve and the English Department became an effective unit that positively impacted student learning and achievement.

### **6.5 Research Questions**

There was one main research question guiding this study: *How does a Head of Department navigate school culture, leadership structures and challenges to improve a subject department?*

This research question is very broad. To assist in answering this question, several supporting questions were posed. These questions will be addressed in turn in this section, with a reflection upon this broad research question presented at the end.

The first supporting research question was: What actions did I take to improve the staff morale of the English Department? Busher and Blease (2000) identified that a culture of collegiality is effective lever for developing leadership and also a key step in fostering social cohesion and relational trust. As the English Department had five HoDs in six years prior to my arrival, the morale in the English Department was low. Developing a culture of collegiality within the English Department was one of the main ways that I sought to improve staff morale. I instigated morning teas, lunches so that we could share some time together away from the busyness of and stresses of the school day. I also implemented a practice of one-on-one conversations with the teachers in the Department so that I could tailor specific professional development activities towards them, support and protect them from unnecessary obstructions to their teaching and discuss professional goals and ways in which I could help them achieve those goals. As part of developing a collegial and collaborative culture, I worked with staff on developing resources to use in their classrooms. I listened to staff and ensured that there was an “open door” policy for my office. I also wanted teachers to observe my teaching as well as each other as a way of fostering trust between each of the teachers and also professional development exercise because each teacher had strengths from which we could draw so that we could be a stronger cohesive Department.

Rosenfeld, Ehrich and Cranston (2008) argued that interpersonal skills are important for developing effective leadership as essentially leadership is about relationships with others. In this study, my interpersonal skills were a major factor in improving the English Department. I demonstrated empathy, an ability to work with others, good and effective communication skills, was visionary and had a keen sense of humor. These skills enabled me to communicate and work effectively with staff upon appointment. However, there were other interpersonal skills that I did not possess at the commencement of his appointment. The Professional Review indicated that I needed to improve my listening skills and also my skills in sharing resources. Through an active focus on these skills, these areas were quickly developed. The semi-structured interviews and the Professional Review both revealed that interpersonal skills were a critical lever to school improvement. Being able to relate well to others and build capacity and also capability in the other teachers within the department was seen as a primary aspect of the role.

The second supporting question was: What practices and procedures did I introduce so that learning outcomes in English could be improved? There were several practices and procedures introduced to improve the learning outcomes in the English Department. These areas included: teaching and learning programmes (Harris, 1995), faculty meetings (Turner, 2000, 2003), having regular one-on-one conversations with teachers in the English Department, introduction of a Department Handbook

(Brown & Rutherford, 1998, 1999) and managing performance of staff (Aubrey-Hopkins & James, 2002).

I demonstrated high levels of expertise in curriculum and pedagogy; this expertise was seen to be instrumental to the development of quality teaching and learning programmes. Clearly, this expertise was drawn upon from the beginning of my appointment to the school due to the urgent the Registration and Accreditation process. Beyond this, I implemented practices that supported departmental effectiveness. Having faculty meetings where practices could be shared and discussed were seen as ways of also developing a more collegial and collaborative culture within the English Department.

The development of the Department Handbook was another practice which helped. The Handbook included all policies, administrative procedures and teacher expectations. This ensured that all teachers in the department knew what was expected of them. This proved to be a very important management tool in the English Department.

One of the important skills that I developed was in dealing with underperforming staff. This meant having courage and also demonstrating philosophies about student learning. Hattie's (2009) meta-analysis on student achievement outlined the importance of teachers and their contribution to student achievement. To this end, the core business of schools is to educate students and to provide them with maximum life chances. For me, this was a compelling reason to seek to improve performance of the teachers within the English Department. Courage was important because it meant having very difficult conversations and potentially bearing the brunt of an angry teacher and the consequences of those actions. There was some fallout from this in that some of the teachers sided with the two teachers. This had the resultant effect of isolating me from some of the teachers. This negativity could be overcome because I had built a positive relationship with each of the teachers prior to the having to manage the performance of the two teachers. Development of courage and greater skills in resilience to deal with the loneliness of the position was an important outcome for me. Whilst the performance management process was unpleasant it did have positive effects on the further development of an effective department.

The third supporting research question was: How can Heads of Department make a difference? HoDs make a difference by implementing a range of practices and procedures which support student learning, building staff morale, developing effective interpersonal skills having high quality teaching and learning programmes from which the teachers can teach, having department meetings

on a frequent basis, introducing a Department Handbook and being willing to overcome the challenges of being isolated from within the Department for addressing issues of underperforming staff. Whilst this list is not exhaustive, it is what I did in order to make a difference within my school. I was able to do this in the face of adversity and much opposition from various members of the SMT in the school. Leadership is a challenge, and when the relationship between the HoD and the Senior Management Team is less than supportive, it is even more of a challenge. Ideally the SMT and HoD relationship is based on a shared vision of educational practice and also one where student learning is seen as being central to the work of schools (Glover et al., 1999; Sammons et al., 1996). And, collaboratively all teachers within a department would work together with the HoD and the Senior Management Team to take the school into the future as student learning would be the focus. In an ideal context all of these elements would synergise and be a powerful force in sustaining and promoting effective schooling. However, no school is utopian and there are sections of schools where this idealisation falters.

I worked in a school where the relationship between some members of the Senior Management Team and me was not ideal. This situation was a real test to me and made working at this school relatively unpleasant. Through the use of Level 3 coercion and overtly authoritarian leadership it had ramifications for my mental and physical health which resulted in my desire to seek employment elsewhere (Blase & Blase, 2005; Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2011). What I experienced was workplace bullying and manipulation of power in a micropolitically charged context (Riley, Duncan & Edwards, 2009). However, I managed to create an effective department as well as I could. Although potentially taxing personally, a HoD can contribute to the creation of an effective department. The key appeared to be: resilience to continue despite loneliness when tough decisions must be made; resilience to continue despite times when there is not an alignment in the purposes between a HoD and the Senior Management Team; and resilience in maintaining a positive attitude through various coping mechanisms (Newhouse-Maiden et al., 2006).

From this study, there are several things that we learn about HoDs:

HoDs occupy a position that is influential in shaping and transforming teaching and learning within a school.

The HoD role involves a blend of management and leadership – daily administrative tasks coupled with big picture and vision for the future and leading teachers so that the vision can be achieved.

HoDs need to be advocates for their staff but also hold their staff to account for their professional practice.

HoDs must be able to manage the performance of the teachers within their departments and they need to be personally resilient so as to bear the loneliness that can come from being someone who must manage performance of teachers in their department.

HoDs have a dichotomous role that is tremendously rewarding but also very demanding.

HoDs can, and should, promote and sustain the practice of effective schooling and teaching.

HoDs need to possess effective interpersonal skills because the basis of leadership is relationships with others. This is both a reward and a challenge.

HoDs must be experts in the academic disciplines that they teach and be experts in teaching their academic disciplines.

HoDs are role models to the teachers and students within their departments.

HoDs need to protect their staff members from intrusive matters and also from other staff members in the school so that they can teach uninhibited.

HoDs work long hours due to the demanding and multifaceted nature of the role.

Time is always an issue for HoDs. Being able to manage the competing demands is important.

Often the HoD's own teaching is what is neglected due to the demands of the role and dealing with matters pertaining to members of their department.

HoDs are caught between the SMT and the teachers in their departments. The HoDs need to be supportive of the SMT but they also need to be advocates of the members in their departments.

HoDs need to develop resilience and be able to bear many challenges to their leadership.

HoDs play critical roles in mentoring beginning teachers and supporting these teachers in their professional practice.

HoDs need to be able to articulate a clearly defined vision for teaching and learning within their subject areas.

HoDs need to be aware of their locus of control. Not everything can be controlled. The only thing that you can control is your response to what happens.

HoDs need to control what can be controlled (such as ensuring things within the department are operating effectively).

HoDs should be authentic to their own personal and professional values in the face of adversity knowing that the adversity will pass.

HoDs might navigate difficult working relationships and need to be aware of power imbalances between themselves and the person to whom they report.

HoDs should seek to understand the micropolitical context within their own school.

HoDs need to understand that not all conflict in a school or department is bad.

HoDs should use the power that they have in the school to empower others rather than to coerce the teachers.

## **6.6 Future Research**

There are some recommendations for future areas of research that come from this study.

One of the recommendations for future areas of research would be to strengthen the research through a different approach. The inclusion of other HoDs at the school and analyzing their experiences to see how they fared when faced with challenging circumstances would help to generate more generalizations about the HoD role at the school in this study.



Another recommendation would be to conduct additional case studies across a number of schools to explore how HoDs develop resilience and how HoDs can support the development of resilience in the teachers they lead.

Finally, an examination of the ways in which HoDs manage the performance of teachers within their departments would prove valuable to the knowledge about how performance management is done most effectively. This could be done in a comparative approach between states or countries.

## **6.7 Concluding Comments**

Anderson et al. (2007), Leithwood and Day (2007) and Mulford (2008) have attested to the fact that we are currently in “the Golden Age” of educational leadership. This study contributes to “the Golden Age” by presenting an Institutional Ethnography blended with a Teacher Self-Study which explores the challenges and triumphs I faced as a middle leader. This project is significant because not only do my practices align with the leadership literature but they also demonstrate an insight into my daily lived experience at the school, and my various dealings with power play and the manipulation of power which had significantly negative impacts upon my physical and mental health. This project also explored how my practices extend the current literature. It extends the literature by highlighting that HoDs should be people who are courageous in their leadership of their departments. The courage and resilience of the HoD is of paramount importance when addressing the underperformance of teachers and when navigating an ineffective working relationship with members of the Senior Management Team who make the HoD’s work even more difficult than what it would otherwise be if the HoD was empowered through a more collaborative and supportive approach from the SMT. The adoption of the mindset of “let sleeping dogs lie” with regards to the underperformance of teachers within the department was challenged in this study. I confronted the underperformance and to have done so required courage, as it was lonely dealing with this performance management aspect of the role. I also had to work closely with a member of the Senior Management Team where that relationship was difficult. This person was primarily the person to whom I reported. This required me to be courageous and resilient as I worked to implement the mandated changes initiated by the Senior Management Team despite the protestations of the department. Leadership is a challenge. However, leadership is also rewarding because at the heart of it is the improvement of student learning and enabling the students in our schools to have the maximum chances in life.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1 – Semi-Structured Interviews

1. What are some of the initiatives that the HoD has sought to introduce that you have liked?
2. What are some of the initiatives that the HoD sought to introduce that you didn't like?
3. How would you consider the effectiveness of the introduced initiatives?
4. What are some other initiatives that you would like to see introduced?
5. How would you describe the leadership style of the HoD?
6. How approachable and supportive do you find the HoD? Are there any areas you feel that the HoD could support you more?
7. For staff who have been at the school for a long time (ie more than five years) – how would you rate the effectiveness of the HoD in introducing change within the department?
8. For newer staff to the school (fewer than five years) – Is this a pleasant work environment? Why/why not? In what ways can this be attributed to the HoD?

## Appendix 2 – Programme and Initiatives Survey

### English Department Programmes and Initiatives Survey

The purpose of this survey is to gather feedback on programmes and initiatives within the English Department in order to evaluate their effectiveness and perceived value, and to make changes for continued improvement. The survey asks you to comment on the programmes within the faculty, new initiatives within the faculty, and your sense of ownership to initiatives within the faculty. The time you take to consider and give your honest opinion on items contained in this survey is greatly appreciated. If you would like to add extended comments, please feel free to do so either in the space provided or on the back of the survey sheets.

#### Faculty Programmes

1. Please indicate the degree (on a scale of 1 – 5 where 1 is strongly disagree) to which you agree with the following statements:

The teaching programmes in the faculty are:

	(Strongly disagree)				(Strongly agree)
	1	2	3	4	5
(a) Easy for teachers to use	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Engaging for the students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Inclusive of suitable assessments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) Inclusive of various teaching strategies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) Inclusive of suitable teaching strategies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(f) Works in progress and reviewed frequently	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(g) Owned by the teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(h) Reflective of teacher involvement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Faculty Initiatives

2. The list below includes some new initiatives within the Department. Please indicate which one you believe have been valuable for the Department. Tick the one you think is best.

- ☐ External marking of important examinations, for example Trial HSC
- ☐ Professional development
- ☐ Regular faculty meetings
- ☐ Study sessions for Year 12 students
- ☐ Other (please specify on the lines below)

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3. Select one of the initiatives listed in question 2. Explain why you think that initiative was the most effective.

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### Involvement in Faculty Decisions

4. Indicate the degree (scale of 1 – 5 where 1 is strongly disagree) to which you agree with the following statements:

I feel a sense of:

(Strongly disagree) (Strongly agree)

	1	2	3	4	5
(a) involvement in decision making within the faculty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) ownership of the initiatives in the faculty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) satisfaction in the direction of the faculty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Background Information

How long have you been working at the school?

- ☐ less than one year  
☐ between one and three years  
☐ between three and five years  
☐ between five and ten years  
☐ between ten and fifteen years  
☐ more than fifteen years

Thank you for your completion of this survey

## Appendix 3 – Ethics Approval Confirmation

### SCHOOL OF EDUCATION Response to Application for Ethical Clearance

<b>Applicant Name</b> Gareth Scott
<b>Principal Supervisor:</b> Shelley Dole
<b>Applicant email address:</b> Chaucer_1@hotmail.com
<b>Participants/Recruitment (Qs 1-3) -</b> Ethical issues about consent have been clearly addressed in the amended application.
<b>Project Summary/Research Plan (Qs 4-5)</b> Clearly stated.
<b>Ethical Considerations (Qs 6-17)</b> The amended application has clearly articulated/addressed ethical considerations.
<b>Consent Form/Information Sheet</b> Please make changes to text as specified in attached application form (accept changes and remove comment).
<b>Questionnaire</b> NA
<b>Gatekeepers</b> NA
<b>Presentation (correct form, typed, error free)</b> Good.
<b>Comments &amp; Recommendation</b> The applicant has suitably addressed ethical issues raised in the original application about working with participants that are directly under his supervision. The application is approved with the assumption that the tracked changes made to the information sheet by me will be accepted prior to distribution.
<b>Kim Nichols member of UQSE Research Ethics Committee</b>  Date. 5 <sup>th</sup> January, 2010.



## **Appendix 4: Professional Review**

### **Professional Review of the Head of Department**

#### Professional Leadership

- Planning
- Management of Staff
- Management of Students and Parents
- Management of Resources

The purpose of this review is to receive feedback on the progress of the Head of an English Department. As the influence of a coordinator on the progress of a Faculty is extensive, a review to gather information is in the best interests of both the coordinator and the Faculty as a whole. This is not an appraisal as such; rather it is more a review of progress. It is an opportunity to obtain honest open and unguarded responses for the benefit of the coordinator and for the Faculty as a whole. Thank you for your willingness to be a part of this Review process.

#### **Rating**

**3** – an area of strength

**2** – working towards being an area of strength

**1** – satisfactory

**0** – needs improvement

**N/A** – not applicable or unable to comment

Area of Professional Development	Professional Standards	Performance Indicators	Rating
<b>Professional Leadership</b>	<b>Coordinators have great expertise and a depth of knowledge of their subject area; they are excellent classroom practitioners.</b>  <b>Coordinators have excellent administrative skills and a clear understanding of their responsibilities, consistent with the philosophy of the school and the NSW BOS guidelines. Coordinators have excellent skills as team players and guide and nurture their staff towards the department's articulated goals.</b>  <b>Coordinators have</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leads by example in the classroom and staffroom</li> </ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Directs and orients the department</li> </ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensures that programmes and registration are current, available to staff, address learning needs of students and reflect the school's policies and special characteristics</li> </ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensures appropriate and effective implementation of policies regarding student homework, assignment and Assessment methods</li> </ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensures marks are recorded appropriately</li> </ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishes and clearly communicates departmental priorities throughout the calendar year – eg lead in times for preparation and marking of examination papers</li> </ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintains positive relations within the school and in the wider community</li> </ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keeps up-to-date with current management and professional practices through reading and training</li> </ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participates as an effective member of the Academic</li> </ul>	

Area of Professional Development	Professional Standards	Performance Indicators	Rating
	the whole school’s vision in mind when leading their department.	Committee	
		• Supports school policies and procedures	
		• Has a bigger view of the school’s operation and where their department fits in	
Additional Comments:			
Planning	Coordinators have the ability to articulate a vision, establish collaborative departmental goals, and implement Action Plans. Coordinators have the whole school’s vision in mind when planning their department’s year.	• Has a clear vision for the Department with clearly articulated priorities and goals	
		• Maintains a long term focus	
		• Demonstrates strategic planning and analytic thinking	
		• Understands major trends affecting the profession and initiates a strategic response	
		• Meets deadlines - manages time for self and others	
		• Follows up and resolves issues	
		• Develops and implements action plans	

Area of Professional Development	Professional Standards	Performance Indicators	Rating
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plans effectively with the whole school vision in mind</li> </ul>	
Additional Comments			
Management of staff	<b>Coordinators are proven people managers who can get their staff to work collaboratively and effectively.</b>  <b>Coordinators support the members of their team in the meeting of individual, departmental and school needs.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fosters an open, honest, two-way communication</li> </ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is approachable</li> </ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourages, respects and values the contributions of all individuals</li> </ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrates negotiation skills</li> </ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delegates appropriately</li> </ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allocates duties equitably</li> </ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotes teamwork and encourages involvement</li> </ul>	

Area of Professional Development	Professional Standards	Performance Indicators	Rating	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Positions team members effectively, and builds diverse work teams to improve quality of teaching and learning in the Department</li></ul>		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourages and motivates staff by providing constructive feedback and positive reinforcement when appropriate</li></ul>		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assists staff to improve their skills in teaching and learning approaches, by sharing ideas</li></ul>		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Aligns individual and departmental goals</li></ul>		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provides effective assistance to beginning teachers</li></ul>		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communicates clearly and concisely eg in a departmental handbook and departmental minutes</li></ul>		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Has systems in place which guide staff in following policies</li></ul>		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communicates clearly and concisely the processes used by the Department to place students in classes</li></ul>		
Additional Comments:				
Management of	Coordinators can	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communicates as required through the school’s</li></ul>		

Area of Professional Development	Professional Standards	Performance Indicators	Rating
Students and Parents	represent the school and communicate effectively to a range of audiences in a range of styles	information dissemination systems – the Daily and Family Bulletin	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Listens effectively to student and parent concerns resolving issues in a win-win fashion</li></ul>	
Additional Comments:			
Management of Resources	Coordinators effectively and efficiently use the resources available to them to support learning outcomes for students and teaching outcomes for staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Plans resources for the year</li></ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Manages and monitors the allocated budget</li></ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Consults staff about resource needs</li></ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ensures that resources reflect the Department’s goals/plan</li></ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ensures that resources are appropriate to courses and levels</li></ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Has appropriate systems in place for booking, accessing and using resources</li></ul>	

Area of Professional Development	Professional Standards	Performance Indicators	Rating
Additional Comments:			

### Note about The Review

The Professional Review provides feedback on the progress of the Head of Department. The review is comprehensive and covers several broad areas that relate to the Head of Department's role. The areas investigated in the review include the following: Professional Leadership (eleven specific points needed a rating), Planning (eight points needed a rating in this section), Management of Staff (fifteen areas required a rating in this section), Management of Students and Parents (two areas needed a rating) and finally, Management of Resources (six areas in this section needed to be rated). At the end of each section, there was space for the reviewer to write an additional comment if they so desired. Connected to these areas are the Professional Standards to the NSW Institute of Teachers so that the Head of Department can ascertain how the Professional Accomplishment and Leadership strands apply to the role and how he measures up against them.

The participants for the review in 2008 and in 2010 were asked to rate the Head of Department on a scale of zero to three and also a N/A where it was not applicable or they were unable to comment. An area "needing improvement" was to be awarded a zero; a one was awarded if it was considered "satisfactory"; a two indicated that it was "working towards being an area of strength"; and the final result, a three was to be awarded for "an area of strength".





